

Hafa Adai!

Probable cause found to try man accused of sexually abusing minor. **PAGE 3**
Walk-in veterinary clinic Saturday, Monday at mayor's animal shelter. **PAGE 5**

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CPA to exhaust all ARPA funds by end of fiscal year

» **Agency seeks additional funding to sustain its operations**

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Ports Authority says it needs sup-

plemental funding to sustain operations because the agency will soon exhaust all its American Rescue Plan Act funds by the end of this fiscal

year, greatly impacting airport operations.

This was learned soon after CPA board chair Kimberlyn King-Hinds met with Federal

Aviation Administration partners at a conference in Honolulu last month, during which one of the topics of discussion was CPA's impending need for supplemental funding.

"One of the topics of dis-

cussion was this impending ask that CPA is going to be making for the need for additional supplemental funding for operations. We were successful in raising and elevat-

See CPA on Page 4

BASED ON 2020 FINANCIAL REPORT

A grim picture of finances

By **MARK RABAGO**
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

While not adjusted to current numbers, the CNMI government's finances were already on shaky ground even before the purported financial mismanagement perpetrated by the

AT A GLANCE

- \$480M net deficit
- \$362 depreciable capital assets
- Capital assets 28% of useful life left
- General fund ratio to debt is \$0.37 to \$1
- Bats for hiring of economist

Saipan) during the Saipan Chamber of Commerce meeting last Wednesday at Kensington Hotel Saipan.

See GRIM on Page 4



MARK RABAGO

Senate President Edith DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan) served as one of the guest speakers of the Saipan Chamber of Commerce general membership meeting last Wednesday at Kensington Hotel Saipan.

SMA seeks partial summary judgment in suit against CPA

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Although the Federal Aviation Administration has determined that it will not take further action in Star Mari-

See SMA on Page 4



EXERCISE AGILE REAPER

F-22 Raptors assigned to the 525th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron, Kadena Air Base, Japan, sit on the flight line after landing during Exercise Agile Reaper 23-1 at the Tinian International Airport in the Northern Mariana Islands last March 1, 2023. Throughout the weeklong exercise, F-22 Raptors will fly sorties from locations within the CNMI in a first for the aircraft. AR 23-1 supports the Air Force's requirement for expeditionary skills necessary to operate outside of military installations; Airmen must have diverse skills that enable them to operate in a contested, degraded, and operationally limited environment. **Story on Page 9**

U.S. AIR FORCE/TECH. SGT. HAILEY STAKER

'TOUCHBACK' COUNTDOWN
Days until
'touchback rule'
takes effect on
Sept. 30, 2023:
211

DeLeon Guerrero: CCC gets just \$1 budget from gov't, but bill wants to slash our pay

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
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REPORTER

Commonwealth Casino Com-

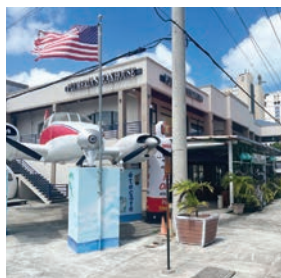
mission board chair Edward C. DeLeon Guerrero said the CNMI government gives CCC an annu-

See BUDGET on Page 4



DeLeon Guerrero

INSIDE



BUSINESS
Plumeria Steakhouse is making the impossible by introducing a \$6.95 breakfast menu.

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WORLD
The devastating earthquakes that struck Turkey and Syria have killed at least 50,000 people.

PAGE 16



LIFE & STYLE
Prince Harry and his wife, Meghan, have been asked to vacate their home in Britain.

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Local

Igisomar gets full support of EAGI Committee, several others

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
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REPORTER

The Senate Executive Appointments and Government Investigations Committee conducted Wednesday afternoon a confirmation hearing for Sylvan Olopai Igisomar who was appointed to serve as secretary for the Department of Lands and Natural Resources.

The committee chaired by Sen. Celina R. Babauta (D-Saipan) heard the full support of several employees of DLNR and other people who testified in favor of Igisomar's nomination.

After hearing the statements by committee members at the conclusion of the hearing, Babauta told Igisomar that it will be this committee's privilege to make the recommendation

to confirm his appointment to the full Senate body.

The chair commended the appointee for "rising to the challenge" and the call to return to active service at DLNR.

"You are a retiree of that department and I like to thank you for rising to the call," she said.

Babauta said there is no question that Igisomar possesses the educational qualification and the wealth of

experience that comes with that position.

The chair said it is her privilege to tell Igisomar that the committee has determined that he meets and possesses the necessary educational and professional qualification, experience, and character that come with that position of DLNR secretary.

Oscar M. Babauta, the newly appointed special assistant



FERDIE DE LA TORRE

Sylvan Olopai Igisomar appears before the Senate Executive Appointments and Government Investigations Committee conducted last Wednesday afternoon for his confirmation hearing.

for the administration of Gov. Arnold I. Palacios and Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang, introduced Igisomar to the committee at the hearing.

Oscar Babauta said Igisomar is an experienced professional with over 20 years of public service in natural resources and emergency management services.

He said the appointee is no longer stranger to DLNR, having served as a quarantine inspector for the Division of Agriculture many years back and a wildlife specialist for the Division of Fish and Wildlife before becoming the director of that division in 2006.

Igisomar was also a biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and became the program coordinator for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services. He is a graduate of the Northern Marianas College and has a master's degree in Public Administration from Grand Canyon University.

Igisomar said he appeared before the committee deeply touched and inspired to be

considered for this position of DLNR secretary by Palacios and Apatang.

"I wish to extend my deepest respect and appreciation to the governor and lieutenant governor and I am eager to confront the department's challenges under their very capable leadership," Igisomar said.

He said he is excited to join the members of the department's rank and file.

"I have deep respect and administration for the able, dedicated, and courageous men and women who serve our community in the department day in and out, often in the face of danger and at personal risk, sacrifice," he said.

Igisomar said he wishes now to navigate toward several short-term and long-term goals should he be confirmed to lead DLNR.

"I am an optimist. And I am full of hope about the future of the CNMI. Let us work together for a CNMI that can deliver more and better for our people," he said.

Saipan student named to Ithaca College's Dean's List

Jimin Woo of Saipan has been named to Ithaca College's Fall 2022 Dean's List.

Founded in 1892, Ithaca College is a residential college that is home to some 5,200 students. The college

offers more than 70 degree programs in its schools of Business; Communications; Humanities and Sciences; Health Sciences and Human Performance; and Music, Theatre, and Dance. (PR)

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Probable cause found to try man accused of sexually abusing minor

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**
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REPORTER

The Superior Court has found probable cause to try a man

who is being accused of sexually abusing a minor in the first degree.

Superior Court Wesley Bogdan found probable cause to try

Babauta grateful for appointment as special assistant for administration

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios has appointed former House of Representatives speaker Oscar M. Babauta to serve as a special assistant for his and Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang's administration.

The appointment does not require the Senate's advice and consent, so he can start work immediately.

The former House speaker told *Saipan Tribune* yesterday that he is thankful to Palacios and Apatang for their confidence in him sharing the administration's vision and goals.

He said he is grateful being given the trust in assisting the CNMI and its people in moving forward.

Babauta served as House

speaker in the 15th Legislature.

On Dec. 17, 2020, then-Gov. Ralph DLG Torres and then-Lt. Gov. Arnold Palacios appointed Babauta to serve as a member of the Northern Marianas Housing Corp. board of directors representing Saipan. He is currently a member of the NMHC board.

Babauta served as the Inauguration Committee chair for Palacios and Apatang. (*Ferdie de la Torre*)

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Manuel A. Pinaula for sexual abuse of a minor in the first degree, among other crimes.

During a preliminary hearing last Wednesday, the court heard testimonies from police detectives Shannon Dela Cruz and Ben H. Atalig of the Criminal Investigation Division of the Department of

Public Safety.

After their testimonies, Bogdan found probable cause to believe that the crimes of sexual abuse of a minor in the first degree, in violation of 6 CMC § 1306(a)(2), assault and battery, in violation of 6 CMC § 1202(a), and disturbing the peace, in violation of 6 CMC § 3101(a) were

committed and found probable cause that the defendant committed the offenses.

"Defendant is therefore held to answer [the] charges," said the judge.

The prosecution was represented by assistant attorney general Frances T. Demapan during the hearing while

Pinaula was present and appeared under the custody of Department of Corrections with his counsel, assistant public defender Scott Tyler.

Pinaula is set to appear before Presiding Judge Roberto C. Naraja on March 6, for his arraignment.

Pinaula has since been remanded back to Department of Corrections custody.

Power service interruption on March 6

There will be a scheduled power service interruption on March 6, 2023, in Sadog Tasi, from 9am to 12pm.

■ Area Affected: Sadog Tasi (*Coastal Drive*)

■ Purpose: To replace a defective wooden power pole.

■ Water well(s) affected: SQ-4, SQ-148, SQ-1'19, SQ-7, SQ-9, SQ-10, RP-1 & SQ-11 (water services to Garapan,

Upper/Lower Navy Hill, China Town and As Falape may be affected based on tank level)

■ Wastewater facility affected: *None*

■ Traffic light(s): *None*

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convenience to its customers. For more information, contact the *CUC Hotline* at (670) 236-4333 or monitor our *Facebook* page for the latest updates (<https://www.facebook.com/CommonwealthUtilitiesCorporation/>). (*PR*)



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2 allegedly burglarized former governor Tenorio's residence

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**
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REPORTER

Two persons have been arrested for allegedly burglarizing the home of former governor Pedro P. Tenorio.

Mark S. Benavente and Josephine J. Pangelinan have been arrested for allegedly breaking into and robbing the residence of the late governor back in January.

Superior Court Associate Judge Wesley Bogdan has imposed a \$10,000 cash bail for each defendant.

Both defendants have been remanded back to Department of Corrections custody where they will await further court proceedings.

The co-defendants were ordered to return to court on March 8, for their preliminary hearings.

Benavente, 42, and Pangelinan, 29, are both facing charges of burglary and theft.

According to court documents, the caretakers of the Tenorio residence called the Department of Public

Safety back on Jan. 24, reporting an alleged break-in.

Some of the items that were stolen from the residence was a flatscreen TV, laptops, hand tools, clothing, watches, shoes, purses, wallets, golf clubs, and more.

At the scene, officers were escorted to the most western side of the residence where they saw a broken window on the second floor.

In addition, responding officers observed every room of the house to be open with several broken door

knobs, opened boxes and bins with its contents scattered on the floor, and personal items in disarray on both the second and ground floor.

A longer version of this story is available at www.saipantribune.com

GRIM

From Page 1

DeLeon Guerrero, who is the first female Senate president in CNMI history, said that based on the fiscal year 2020 financial report her office recently received, the Commonwealth already had a net deficit nearing \$500 million in fiscal year 2020.

"So yes, it's a \$480-million net deficit for the Commonwealth as of 2020. Depreciable capital assets is \$362 million, accumulated depreciation of that particular asset is \$262 million, and the CNMI's capital assets are very interesting as we have 28% of useful life for any of our capital assets," she said.

DeLeon Guerrero said the last figure is "very, very serious" because, in other words, the CNMI badly needs to improve its infrastructure.

"And I'm happy to say that a lot of movement is going on with respect to construction projects here on Saipan and a lot of that is happening also on Tinian with the infusion of the military buildup, and on island of Rota I'm sure there's many projects going on down there."

In a further snapshot of the CNMI government's dire financial situation, she disclosed that the CNMI's long-term debt stands at \$586 million and 214% of its assets were funded by debt. This means for every \$1 of asset, the CNMI owes \$2.14 to others."

Total non-capital expenditures

amounted to \$538 million and, of that number, the CNMI is paying \$58.9 million for principal and interest for long-term debt alone, added DeLeon Guerrero.

Moreover, she said \$1.7 cents is spent on non-capital for every dollar the CNMI owes and the general fund ratio to debt is \$0.37 to \$1.

"We need to figure out something much, much better with respect to growing our industries, identifying viable industries for our market, so that we don't necessarily have a higher percentage of funding through debt in order for us to save our government and to provide public service. We need to figure this out together," she enjoined Chamber members.

One solution that DeLeon Guerrero is on board with is for the government to finally hire an economist.

"We do not have an economist in the house. How can we sit here and talk about 'oh this is great and this is the industry for us.' Why don't we have an economist in the house of this government? We need that so that this person will tell us exactly what are the vital industries for the Commonwealth, What industries are not good for us because they're just not going to make money in our area. And so we need that person and we need to find that person [fast]," she said.

With the government's finances in dire straits, the first to be severely affected are the people and this is reflected on the standard of living in the CNMI the past several years.

"Why is it that continuously we have more than 60% of our people living in poverty? It's a systemic issue. It's the government that makes services happen, but yet all of these concerns are still on the books unresolved and people continue to go deeper into poverty. That is not healthy and so what have we done lately?"

And to think that federal grants in the millions of dollars are actually available and unspent, collecting dust in government agencies that could be used for the public good, she added.

"[Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan] spoke about there's a lot of money. It's true. I'll be honest, when I first became a senator in 2021, I was looking at a quarterly report per department and I saw \$20 million-some still sitting in the books continuously being carried over every fiscal year. So I picked up the phone and I called the department secretary. I said, 'What's going on and why are these monies not being committed? Why am I seeing continuous carryover of this money?' And more money comes in and balloons itself. And if they're not hitting the streets, they're not becoming shovel-ready. What are we doing? Why are we not making contracts? Why are we not engaging with contractors to build these projects that we need so badly?" she asked.

A longer version of this story is available at www.saipantribune.com

SMA

From Page 1

anas Airline's complaint against the Commonwealth Ports Authority, the airline continues to argue their case in the CNMI Superior Court and has sought a partial summary judgment in its favor.

Earlier this week, the FAA issued a letter addressed to Star Marianas president Shaun Christian stating that, based on their review of SMA's informal complaint regarding CPA's fee and methodology rate, the FAA has found that CPA is in compliance with federal laws.

Due to these findings, Star Marianas was instructed to resolve all delinquent accounts with CPA and to pay all its past due fees. Star Marianas owes CPA over \$3 million in overdue fees dating back to 2014.

However, despite the FAA finding, SMA continues to fight a similar battle against CPA in Superior Court, alleging that CPA has breached the Airline Use Agreement by increas-

ing its fees and failing to provide Star Marianas with a copy of their previous fiscal year budgets.

In a recent court filing with the Superior Court, Star Marianas asked the court to grant them a partial summary judgment.

According to its motion for summary judgment, SMA wants the court to find CPA in breach of the Airline Use Agreement by failing to provide the annual budget and for adjusting their charges appropriately pursuant to the agreement.

However, SMA says the amount has yet to be determined as the airline is unable to make exact calculations as CPA has yet to provide them any information regarding their budget and costs.

CPA has since opposed the motion for summary judgment.

According to *Saipan Tribune* archives, Star Marianas is suing CPA and five unnamed co-defendants for breach of contract, violation of anti-head tax, and for unreasonable user fees.

The complaint alleges that CPA

has never complied with the agreement's cost accounting and fee adjustment requirements since SMA has been operating as an airline at the airports and commuter terminals.

SMA says that, under federal law, CPA is required to make airports and their associated facilities available to the public and airport users, such as SMA, under reasonable conditions and without unjust discrimination.

Since 2009, SMA alleges that it has been asking CPA to disclose its audited accounting records as mandated by federal regulations and the airline use agreement.

As a result of these alleged breaches of the Airline Use Agreement, SMA claims it has suffered damage in the form of excessive airport and commuter terminal user fees that are greater than the reasonable fees that SMA should have been assessed.

SMA estimates, based on its accounting records, that the amount in fees which have either been paid or which CPA claims remains assessed but unpaid by SMA, are hundreds of thousands of dollars.

CPA

From Page 1

ing the concerns of CPA when the pandemic first started and CPA was recognized for that. Now we're doing the same thing and we're making the argument that we are not Hawaii where they have droves of tourists that are coming in from the mainland. Even though they don't have a robust Japanese market, you have folks from the mainland who continue to travel. That's not the case here. We have a very limited marketing pool and our main markets like Japan and Korea are still recovering," she said. "So when you're looking at sustainability of the airports and being able to continue operating at a level that can accommodate additional arrivals, we're going to need a little bit of help."

Another topic of discussion was the \$55 million that CPA has been allocated under the Biden administration's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and how CPA plans to use those funds, King-Hinds said.

"One of the priorities we have right

now is finally addressing the rehabilitation of the runway. Just to recap, there's issues with the runway, we're currently in litigation with a construction company. We cannot wait until that litigation has been completed to begin addressing the rehabilitation of the runway because this is a very safety sensitive issue," she said.

"Over the course of the last five years since I've been a board member, we have been trying to go out—whether it be [with the Commonwealth Development Authority] or [U.S. Department of Agriculture]—to take out a loan but the issue has always been the fact that we're currently in litigation so what we've worked really hard to do and we've been successful in doing is convincing the FAA to give us the money and to be able to qualify this project under these new infrastructure entitlements," she added.

Aside from the allocation, King-Hinds said she also brought up the need for funding for other projects in the CNMI like the pavement of the Saipan commuter road, which is estimated to cost around \$2 million, and the need for funding to replace the Rota airport canopy.

BUDGET

From Page 1

al budget of just \$1, but a Senate bill still wants to slash the compensation for CCC, which has him scratching his head.

"I do not understand. Obviously I think politics has a lot to do with this particular bill," said DeLeon Guerrero during the CCC board's regular monthly meeting Tuesday.

Senate Bill 23-26 seeks to amend the compensation of CCC members. Sen. Celina R. Babauta (D-Saipan) is the author of the legislation.

Babauta stated in the bill that the compensation of the CCC exceeds that of many other instrumentalities of the CNMI government, yet, with the license of the sole casino licensee, Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC being suspended, the funding mechanism for this "generous compensation" is now effectively defunct.

Keep in mind, DeLeon Guerrero said, that unlike other boards and commissions, no member of the CCC is authorized to have anything to do with the entity they regulate.

"If you have apartment on your private business, the entity we regulate cannot rent your apartment. If you have a business selling vegetables, you cannot go to the operator to sell your vegetables. We're not allowed to work for this company," he said.

He said the CCC had previous discussions with the Legislature and extensive discussions with CCC's former legal counsel that during austerity and even typhoons, the casino is a 24/7 operation.

DeLeon Guerrero said the issue of financial austerity does not affect the CCC. "The issue does not affect CCC because, if there is austerity, the intent is to save money. But we don't have any money from the central

government. We have \$1. So you're not saving anything," he pointed out.

The chairman said CCC does not charge the government to pay the office and not even the power.

"But the thing is, we need to monitor, regulate the industry," he said.

DeLeon Guerrero noted that CCC employees have to be there not only to observe, but CCC staff have to be there in cases of disputes to help resolve matters.

"Now, If you say OK, CCC, to save money you're closed but the casino will continue to open. ...How can they open when the regulators are closed? It's just it doesn't make sense," he said.

The chairman said that, regarding compensation, the law authorizes the CCC to basically establish its own personal rate.

"This one [bill] has taken those positions out," he said.

Since the current law says CCC employees are not government employees, they are not entitled to insurance and retirement benefits, DeLeon Guerrero said.

He said he will prepare a response to the bill that says they will not support this legislation in its current form.

CCC commissioner Mariano Taitano said since they already commented on that bill during the previous 22nd Legislature, they will just make minor changes in their comments.

"It's just a recycled bill with some tweaking. It's almost the same things that we're discussing now," Taitano said.

The commissioners also discussed during the meeting the need to comment on Senate Bill 23-06, that seeks to amend the Commonwealth Code to authorize the casino commission of each senatorial district to regulate the maintenance of the poker and pachinko machines. Sen. Jude U. Hofschneider (R-Tinian) is the author of the bill.

Proclamation signing recognizes Champions of Equal Opportunity

By **CHRYSTAL MARINO**
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CORRESPONDENT

Gov. Arnold Palacios and Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang have designated the month of March as Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month in a proclamation signing last

Wednesday morning at the Saipan World Resort that also honored individuals and businesses because of their many efforts and services as the 2023 Saipan Champions of Equal Opportunity.

The event, which was intended to celebrate commu-

nity members who dedicate time and effort into helping individuals with developmental disabilities and to encourage the inclusion of all individuals in community opportunities, also saw the presence of many advocates such as the CNMI Disability Network Partners and members of the community.

"This is a time for us to focus on helping the public better understand the important contributions of our citizens with disabilities. We encourage all citizens to raise awareness and to give full support to efforts toward enabling people with developmental disabilities to live productive lives and achieve their optimum potential," said Palacios and Apatang.

The theme of this year's celebration is "Beyond the Conversation." Sablan said the theme reflects the question of what comes next after conversations about developmental disabilities. "It is time to ask the question, 'Once conversations have taken place, what comes next?' What comes next is action. What are communities doing to create change? So simply said, the time for talking is over, now it is time for us to act to create this change."

The proclamation signing



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios and Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang proclaim the month of March 2023 as Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month in a proclamation signing last Wednesday morning at the Saipan World Resort.

also saw the presentation of awards to recognize certain individuals and businesses as the 2023 Saipan Champions of Equal Opportunity.

John Allen A Cabrera was awarded the Saipan Advocate of the Year, and Vicente M. Babauta was awarded the Saipan Community Member Advocate of the Year.

Tai Doram was recognized as the Saipan Educator Advocate of the Year, and the Center for Living Independently took the Saipan Employer Ad-

vocate of the Year.

Dr. Yvonne R. Pangelinan was awarded Saipan Family Advocate of the Year.

The Saipan Legislative Advocate of the Year award was given to former representative Leila Staffler, the Saipan Private Business Advocate of the Year was the Delta Management Corp. and the Northern Marianas Protection and Advocacy Systems, Inc.

The Division of Youth Services was named this year's Saipan Public Entity Advocate

of the Year, Hannah Igisaiar was recognized as Saipan Self-Advocate of the year and Bre Tudela Humphries, DeVonne P. Sablan, and Juanicia Villanueva were awarded the Saipan NMC-UCEDD Heroes.

Several individuals and families also shared testimonials of how their lives were impacted through programs and services made available and possible through the tireless work of individuals and/or agencies under the Disabilities Network Partners.

Walk-in veterinary clinic Saturday, Monday at Mayor's Animal Shelter

Dr. Whitney Collins, a visiting veterinarian, will be offering vaccines and health exams at the Saipan Mayor's Animal Shelter on Saturday, March 4, from 8am to 12pm, and on Monday, March 6, from 9am to 12pm, in partnership with Saipan Humane Society.

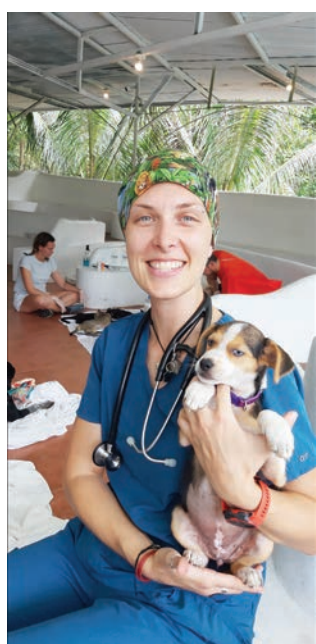
Collins is interested in dog population management to support a healthy island ecosystem, and excited to help the islands' pets. She would like to extend her gratitude to Saipan Mayor Ramon "RB" Camacho for hosting her at the Animal Shelter and Clinic facility.

Services available include rabies vaccines, which can only be given by a licensed veterinarian. Other services will also be offered, including parvovirus vaccines and kennel cough vaccines for dogs, cat vaccines, microchips, heartworm tests, and a limited supply of flea/tick prevention medicine.

Collins will also be available to address specific animal health concerns in 15-minute time slots. Costs per service range from \$12 to \$25.

Appointments will be on a walk-in basis. If bringing a cat, ensure they are enclosed in a carrier or secure box. If bringing a dog, ensure they are wearing a well-fitting leash.

This clinic will take place at



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Dr. Whitney Collins, a visiting veterinarian, will be offering vaccines and health exams at the Saipan Mayor's Animal Shelter on Saturday and on Monday.

the Mayor's Animal Shelter in As Perdido. The shelter can be reached at 234-3647.

If you are interested in getting an animal on the waitlist for sterilization, vaccination, or other veterinary services, go to: <https://tinyurl.com/saipanhumane>

The next spay/neuter clinic will be April 10-14, and scheduling will begin soon.

As always, if you are interested in adopting a dog or puppy, come visit the shelter! (PR)

42nd Flame Tree Arts Festival will go back to the Civic Center

This year's 42nd Flame Tree Arts Festival will be held at the Civic Center Park in Supe on April 21, 22, and 23, and it will carry the same theme as last year's "Healing Through Arts."

Commonwealth Council for Arts and Culture executive director Parker Y. Yobei recently requested help of the Saipan and Northern Islands Legisla-

tive Delegation to appropriate \$37,250 for the event.

The bulk of the budget is for the main stage (light and sound) in the amount of \$13,000.

Yobei told SNILD chair Rep. John Paul Sablan (Ind-Saipan) that the festival continues to grow, and is now one of the largest annual arts and cultural festival in the Micro-

nesian region.

He said the festival and CCAC continue to focus on "Healing Through Arts" for this year's event theme.

Yobei said they believe that arts and this festival can play a big role in the community as everyone move forward from everything that the Commonwealth has been through the past four years.

He said the festival has grown greatly over the past 41 years because of the continued support of community leaders.

Last year's 41st edition of the festival was held at the NMI Museum grounds and at the Sugar King Park, after being paused for two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. (Ferdie de la Torre)

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Monday to Saturday
8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.



Mandapat selected for Obama Foundation program

Kyle Mandapat, assistant director for communications at the University of Guam Sea Grant and Center for Island Sustainability, has been selected for the Obama Foundation 2023 Leaders Asia-Pacific program.

"I am so excited for this opportunity to represent our island and our people. I look forward to learning and sharing alongside some great minds from around the world during this program," said Mandapat, who also handles communications for the National Science Foundation's

Established Program for the Stimulation of Competitive Research program at UOG.

Mandapat joins 34 emerging changemakers from the Asia-Pacific region who will participate in the leadership program from February to July 2023. The program will offer virtual skill-building workshops, network-building opportunities, and a variety of conversations with issue-area experts while focusing on individual growth as a leader.

Mandapat has more than 15 years of experience as an on-air personality for radio and



UNIVERSITY OF GUAM

Kyle Mandapat, assistant director for communications at the University of Guam Sea Grant, Center for Island Sustainability, and Guam NSF EPSCoR, made it to the list of Asia-Pacific changemakers who will participate in the 2023 Leaders Asia-Pacific program, according to the Obama Foundation.

television, a print and digital media writer, and a former vice president of operations at Sorensen Media Group.

At UOG, Mandapat's responsibilities include the development and implementation of strategies for publicizing research and outreach activities to the science com-

munity and the public.

Mandapat said, "I hope to be able to bring back everything that I have learned during this program and use it to benefit our people. I look forward to hearing about solutions from around the planet and seeing how they can apply to our troubles and challenges

here in Guam."

At the end of the program, participants will become part of the Obama Foundation's leadership network. To date, the program has built a network of 270 leaders across 36 nations and territories, working across various sectors and issue areas. (PR)

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY

MAIN OFFICE: SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, 2ND FLOOR ARRIVAL BLDG.
PO BOX 501055-SAIPAN-MP-96950
PHONE: (1-670) 237-6500/1 • FAX: (1-670) 234-5962
WEBSITE: WWW.CNMPORTS.COM

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) CPA-RFP-007-23

GENERATOR PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE SERVICES & REPAIRS

Notice is hereby given that the Commonwealth Ports Authority (CPA) is accepting sealed proposals, subject to the terms and conditions of this Request for Proposals (the "RFP"), and other contract provisions, for proposals from qualified firms, companies and/or corporations to provide Generator Preventive Maintenance Services and Repairs at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport facilities.

This RFP is issued pursuant to Chapter 40-50, Procurement Rules and Regulations of Title 40 of the Northern Mariana Islands Administrative Code (the "NMIC"). Title 40, including chapter 40-50-225, Request for Proposals, is applicable to the process followed by the RFP.

The successful proposer will be awarded 2 years to perform the services with option to renew for an additional 2 years at the sole discretion of CPA.

The proposal package will be available at the Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Ports Authority, Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport, 2nd Floor of the Arrival Building beginning February 21, 2023.

The Commonwealth Ports Authority reserves the right to reject any or all proposals submitted if it's not in the best interest of CPA.

Proposals must be submitted no later than **4:00 P.M., March 23, 2023** to the Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Ports Authority, 2nd Floor of the Arrival Building, Saipan International Airport. Proposals received after the aforementioned date and time will not be accepted.

All proposals shall become the property of the Commonwealth Ports Authority.

FOR THE COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY

CHRISTOPHER S. TENORIO
Executive Director

Date: _____



PROCUREMENT SERVICES CNMI GOVERNMENT



INVITATION TO BID

ITB NO.: ITB23-BECQ/RT-DLNR-42300051-CIF ROTA

SUBMISSION DATE: APRIL 03, 2023 TIME: 9:30 A.M.

PURCHASE OF ONE (1) AGRICULTURAL TRACTOR AND THREE (3) ATTACHMENTS: ONE (1) FRONT-END LOADER, ONE (1) DISKING HARROW, AND ONE (1) ROTARY MOWER FOR THE ROTA, DLNR

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED ON THE
MUNIS VENDOR SELF SERVICE PORTAL
(<https://selfservice.dof.gov.mp/vss/>) OR AT THE OFFICE OF THE
DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES, LOCATED AT
HORIGUCHI BLDG, GROUND FLOOR, 123 KOPPA DI ORU & BEACH
ROAD, GARAPAN, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS,
NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING
GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL
APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY
OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL
DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE
CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ ELI D. CABRERA
BECQ ADMINISTRATOR

/S/ GERALDINE T. CRUZ
ACTING DIRECTOR, PS

Slots still available for NMC Foundation's Golf Open

Golfers who are looking for a chance to win amazing prizes can still enter in the Northern Marianas College Foundation's upcoming Golf Open on March 18 and 19. Online registration is available by accessing www.marianas.edu/golf.

For the first time, NMC's tournament will be a two-day event and will be held on the east and west courses of the LaoLao Bay Golf and Resort. The tournament fee for the 2023 golf open is \$250. First place winners in the Men's Championship, A, B, C, Senior, and Ladies Flights will each receive \$500. Second place finishers will receive \$300 and third place finishers will receive \$200.

This year's tournament will feature thousands of dollars in amazing hole-in-one prizes, such as a brand new 2023 Toyota 4Runner SR5 from Atkins Kroll Saipan, a brand new 2023 Hyundai IONIQ 5 SEL with Navigation and AWD and a brand new 2023 Mitsubishi Outlander from Triple J Motors, a brand new 2023 Nissan Rogue from Joeten Motors, a \$10,000 shopping spree at Top Shelf Wine and Spirits, \$10,000 from Ambyth Shipping and Seafix Inc., \$5,000 from Pacifica Insurance, \$3,000 from McDonald's of Saipan, and a YETI cooler from Boarderline.

The tournament, which is the signature event of the NMC Foundation, aims to raise funds for the college for its rebuilding and reconstruction efforts. After the devastation and destruction of super typhoons Soudelor and



Franco Santos tees off on the east course of the LaoLao Bay Golf and Resort.

NMC

Yutu, the college has been aggressively seeking funds from all available sources to rebuild classrooms, offices, labs, and workforce spaces for the CNMI community. The foundation is seeking the CNMI private sector's support through fundraising events like the golf tournament.

Interested companies and individuals who would like to help the college with its

rebuilding efforts can donate educational tax credit, cash, or in-kind contributions by visiting www.marianas.edu/golf or by contacting NMC Foundation coordinator Carla Sablan at carla.sablan@marianas.edu or (670) 237-6780.

For more updates, follow Northern Marianas College on Facebook and Instagram ([nmc.proa](https://www.facebook.com/nmc.proa)) or visit www.marianas.edu. (NMC)

PAMC stands firm vs Japan plan to dump nuke wastewater

Despite Federated States of Micronesia President David Panuelo’s decision to withdraw his protest against the nuclear wastewater dumping into the Pacific Ocean, the Pacific Alliance of Municipal Councils stands firm in its position against Japan’s plan to dump 1.1 million tons of nuclear wastewater into the Pacific.

According to a PAMC news release yesterday, it said the plan will involve dumping nuclear wastewater into the Pacific at the rate of 43,965 gallons per month or 527,578 gallons a year over a period of 10 years.

The PAMC news release states that its primary concern is that the tests to determine the toxicity level of the wastewater “are based on current ocean composition, and no amount of tests done today can predict future environmental conditions that may interact with the toxic waste” that Japan will dump into the ocean from the devastated Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant that was destroyed by a tsunami in March 2011.

PAMC’s second argument is that “no matter how minuscule

the toxicity is, it will be consumed by small fish, which are prey to larger fish, as well as the cumulative collection on coral reefs and sea plants.”

The third argument is based on the safety assurance made years before the nuclear power plant was established and how those assurances failed against a tsunami’s wrath.

The fourth argument is that if Japan and Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant are so certain of the wastewater safety, “they can seek permission from the citizens of Japan to release the wastewater on land in Japan or use the wastewater

for irrigation and not threaten other nations and people’s mental and physical security.”

PAMC will continue reaching out to organizations and governments of other Pacific island nations to band together and fight against the imple-

mentation of Japan and FNPP’s plan. A mini video symposium is scheduled for Saturday, April 8, 2023, at 2pm. (PR)

MCS opens early bird registration for SY 2023-2024

Mount Carmel School announced yesterday the start of open registration for its “Early Bird Special” for the 2023-2024 school year. The Early Bird Special provides a variety of discounts for families looking to secure their child’s enrollment for the upcoming school year.


The annual early bird registration discount is as follows: K4 registration is \$75 per student, which is normally \$100. K5 registration is \$100, which will be \$150 after the deadline. For

students in grades first through 12th, the registration fee is \$200 per student, which is normally \$400. The deadline for the Early Bird registration and fees is scheduled for May 5, 2023.

Application forms for scholarships and financial aid will be made available online and will be announced on all of Mount Carmel School’s media outlets. The school will also continue discounts for families that enroll more than one child for the 2023-2024 school year.

Additionally, the school’s Leadership Team will be exploring ways to expand scholarship funding and financial aid. This may include earmarking a portion of all Education Tax Credit revenue toward the school’s scholarship and financial aid program.

To learn more about enrolling at Mount Carmel School for the upcoming 2023-2024 school year, call 234-6184 or visit www.mountcarmel-saipan.com. (MCS)



COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY
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E-Mail Address: cpa.admin@pticom.com • Website: www.cnmiports.com

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT # 02-2023

Opening date: February 20, 2023

Closing date: March 10, 2023

Location: SAIPAN
Position(s): (1) ARFF General Maintenance I
(1) ARFF Mechanic II
(1) Lease Compliance Assistant
(1) Information Systems Specialist

SALARY
PL 3/1 to 3/12 (\$8.01/hr. to \$13.70/hr.)
PL 6/1 to 6/12 (\$9.27/hr. to \$15.85/hr.)
PL 14/1 to 14/12 (\$13.70/hr. to \$23.42/hr.)
PL 15/1 to 15/12 (\$14.38/hr. to \$24.60/hr.)

Location: PORT OF SAIPAN
Position(s): (2) Vessel Traffic Controller

SALARY
PL 4/1 to 4/12 (\$8.41/hr. to \$14.38/hr.)

Location: TINIAN
Position(s): (1) AOA Controller/Ground Maintenance-I
(1) Radio Operator/Weather Observer
(1) Custodial-I

SALARY
PL 5/1 to 5/12 (\$8.83/hr. to \$15.10/hr.)
PL 7/1 to 7/12 (\$9.73/hr. to \$16.65/hr.)
PL 1/1 to 1/12 (\$7.26/hr. to \$12.42/hr.)

Employment Application must be accompanied with a copy of all required diploma/certificates and/or official sealed transcripts, original copy of recent police record not more than six (6) months old, original copy of U.S. Department of Defense Form DD214 for retired members or veterans of our Armed Forces, and other documents as required for the position. Public Law 11-70 requires that all male applicants age 18 to 25 years old must submit documentation evidencing his registration with the Federal Selective Service System. All applications and required documents must be submitted to the *CPA Administration Office, 2nd Floor Arrival Building, Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport or CPA Administration Office Tinian International Airport or Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport*. Failure to provide any of the required documents will result in automatic disqualification. Certain vacancies may require written and/or physical test. Selected applicants will be subjected to pre-employment drug screening, 10-year Criminal History Record Check and 49 CFR Part 1542.209(d) Requirements. CPA reserves the right to waive or implement other qualifications to meet its needs. The deadline for submission of applications and required documents to the CPA Administration Office (Saipan) or at the Tinian International Airport or Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport no later than **5:00 P.M. on Friday, March 10, 2023**.

Detailed information on qualifications and position descriptions for the above positions may be picked up along with the application form from Monday-Friday, 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., except on holidays, at the CPA Administration Office (2nd Floor) of the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport, Arrival Terminal or CPA Admin. Office at the Tinian International Airport or at the Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport. For additional information, please contact the CPA Human Resources Office by email at lorna.robert@cnniports.com and hspcialist@cnniports.com or by phone at (670)237-6500.

CPA is an Equal Opportunity Employer and CPA hires those who are legally entitled to employment in the CNMI.

CHRISTOPHER S. TENORIO
Executive Director



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
MVA-RFP-23-2030
Marianas Visitors Authority Office Space Lease

Submission /Closing Date: March 10, 2023 Time: 3:00PM ChST

Submit sealed proposals to: Marianas Visitors Authority
Attn: Procurement Office
Gold Beach Hotel
Beach Rd., Garapan
P.O. Box 500861
Saipan, MP 96950

Interested parties may pick up the RFP package on or after February 22, 2023 at the Marianas Visitors Authority Office, Gold Beach Hotel, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, during the hours of 8:00AM to 5:00PM ChST, Monday through Friday, except holidays. The RFP package can be emailed to anyone interested. The request via email must reference “**MVA - RFP -23- 2030- MARIANAS VISITORS AUTHORITY OFFICE SPACE LEASE**”.

Proposals submitted from individuals outside the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) must be postmarked by the U.S. Postal Service or certified Courier mail service on or before March 10, 2023 and must be received within seven (7) working days of that date. Proposers from outside the CNMI must notify the MVA Procurement Officer Mr. George A. Sablan in writing of their intent to submit in order to receive the additional seven (7) working days for the receipt of the actual Proposal Documents. This notice of intent may be submitted by any mode of written communication including facsimile to +1-670-664-3237 or emailed to gsablan@mymarianas.com and must be received no later than 3:00PM, Chamorro Standard Time (ChST) on March 10, 2023.

/s/ Gloria C. Cavanagh
Acting Chairperson, MVA Board of Directors

/s/ Judy C. Torres
Managing Director, MVA (Acting)



United States Air Force Seeks Public Input for Cultural Resources Interpretive Plan



The U.S. Air Force (Air Force) is seeking public input regarding the preparation of a Cultural Resources Interpretive Plan for historic properties on Tinian. The Interpretive Plan is one of the Air Force’s commitments in the Amendment to the Programmatic Agreement between the Air Force, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Historic Preservation Office, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to resolve adverse effects on cultural resources that could result from the Divert Activities and Exercises (Divert) and the Tinian Divert Infrastructure Improvements (Pipeline) projects. The purpose of the Interpretive Plan is to provide the Air Force with a strategy to prepare educational and historical interpretation materials of historic properties in the Divert and Pipeline project areas for the public. The plan and interpretive materials would be developed by the U.S. Air Force, in coordination with the CNMI, with input from the public. These project areas include West Field (at the Tinian Airport), the Tinian Seaport, and areas between them.

In late 2017, the Air Force sought initial public input on a plan to interpret the World War II historic features of West Field based on the Divert project. Comments received from this solicitation expressed an interest in interpretive products for West Field that included other time periods and resources. The scope of the Interpretive Plan was expanded in the Amendment to the Programmatic Agreement to include cultural resources in both project areas and from all represented time periods. The Air Force is seeking public input in the development of this Plan.

The Interpretive Plan will discuss content and evaluate options for future educational interpretive products for cultural resources in the Divert and Pipeline project areas. Possible products include but are not limited to: signage at publicly accessible historic features, printed brochures, exhibits and/or displays, and electronic products. The Air Force respectfully requests public input on the format and content of interpretive products, including suggested answers to the following questions:

- Who should the interpretive products be for? Who should the intended audience(s) be?
- What are important historical topics and themes that should be addressed?
- Do you have any stories about the project areas or its historic resources?
- What format should interpretive products take?

The Air Force will consider the comments received during the preparation of the Interpretive Plan. Those who wish to provide input are encouraged to submit their comments by email to valerie.curtis.1@us.af.mil or by mail to:

Valerie Curtis
25 E St., Suite C-300
JBPHH, HI 96853-5427
ATTN: Air Force Interpretive Plan

To ensure the Air Force has sufficient time to consider public input in the interpretive planning process, please submit comments by Friday, April 14, 2023.

www.PACAFDivertMarianasEIS.com

ERRATA
Erroneous FAC
The story published yesterday, March 2, 2023, that was titled

“FAC remains the same for the month of March” incorrectly stated that the Fuel Adjustment Charge for the month of March remains at 50.27989

per kilowatt-hour. This is an error. This correct FAC for March is \$0.27989 per kWh. Our apologies for this mistake. The online version of this sto-

ry has already corrected this typographical error.
Headshot error
A story titled “CAO’s Nogis

backs gillnet fishing” that was published on Feb. 24, 2023, mistakenly used the photo of Melvin Faisao under the name of Felix Nogis, the special as-

sistant for the Carolinian Affairs Office. We apologize for the mistake. The online version of this story has already been corrected.

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Power service interruption today
There will be a scheduled power service Interruption today, March 3, 2023, in Garapan, from 9am to 12pm
■ Area affected: Garapan Fire Station Bldg., SURA Korean Restaurant, and CHUN JI Korean Restaurant Bldg.
■ Momentary Outage: 9am to 9:30am
■ Area affected: Garapan (Sang Jee Rent a Car, High Roller Poker)
■ Purpose: To relocate a primary power pole due to a realignment of a sewer main
■ Water wells) affected: None

■ Wastewater facility affected: None
For more information, contact the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. Hotline at (670) 236-4333 or monitor our Facebook page for the latest updates (<https://www.facebook.com/CommonwealthUtilitiesCorporation/>). (PR)

Superior Court to draw prospective jurors today
Pursuant to 7 CMC § 3106, notice is hereby given that the Clerk of the Superior Court will be publicly drawing prospective jurors for Panels 23AS, 23BS, 23CS, 23DS,


23ES, 23FS, 23GS, 23HS, 23IS, 23JS, 23KS, 23LS, 23MS, 23NS, 23OS, 23PS, 23QS, 23RS, 23SS, 23TS, 23US, 23VS, 23WS, 23XS, 23YS, and 23ZS today, March 3, 2023, at 10am before Associate Judge Joseph N. Camacho in Courtroom 220A of the Superior Court. (PR)

Rip current seen through the weekend
There is a high risk of rip currents through the weekend along east-facing reefs, while the high surf advisory is cancelled for north-facing reefs. Based on the information received from the National


Weather Service in Guam, dangerous rip currents are present in east-facing reefs of the Marianas. Rip currents can sweep even the best swimmers away from shore into deeper water.
The large northeast swell may maintain dangerous rip currents for any reefs exposed to the large northeast swell. This includes areas like Ritidian Point and similar northeast facing reefs of the CNMI.
Inexperienced swimmers should remain out of the water due to dangerous surf conditions. The public is reminded to stay out of the water along east-facing reef lines. Swim near a lifeguard. If caught in a rip current, relax and float. Don’t swim against the current. If able, swim in a direction following the shoreline. If unable to escape, face the shore and call or wave for help. (PR)

Water service interruption on Saturday
There will be a scheduled water service interruption on Saturday, March 4, 2023, from 8am to 5pm for Commonwealth Utilities Corp. customers in the following areas: Capital Hill, Papago, Wireless, Mt. Tapochao, and As Teo.
This will allow the CUC contractor, Hong Ye Construction, to perform electrical improvements to the Agag booster station generator building. Water services to the affected areas will resume soon after.
This project is funded by the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program to provide emergency power supply to the Agag water wells.
For more information, contact the CUC Customer Call Center (670) 664-4282 or monitor our Facebook page for the latest updates. (PR)

fense’s Innovative Readiness Training Program for the CNMI Civil Affairs Survey Assessment on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota.
This proposed assistance will involve a deliberate civil survey assessment of existing social, economic, governmental, legal, environmental, healthcare, educational, or infrastructure systems within the community for perceived vulnerabilities and identify areas for future improvements.
The proposed assistance will occur during spring/summer of fiscal year 2023.
Civil engineers, contractors, labor unions, or private individuals who have questions or who wish to voice opposition to military assistance for this project may contact Daniel Aquino, special assistant for Military Affairs, at (670) 788-0935, or by email at daniel.aquino@gov.mp; or by mail at P.O. Box 10007; Saipan, MP 96950 no later than 30 days after posting of this notice. Persons not responding within the time frame noted will be considered to have waived their objections to military assistance for this project. (PR)



COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY(CPA)
CNMI GOVERNMENT
Main Office: SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
P.O. BOX 501055 • SAIPAN • MP 96950 • Phone: (670) 237-6500 • Fax: (670) 234-5962
Website: www.cnmiports.com



NOTICE TO BIDDERS

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY (CPA) is inviting qualified contractors to submit bid proposals and their qualifications for the PORT OF SAIPAN BERTH 103 REPAIRS, Project No. CPA-SS-001-17, for the island of Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Bidders are to submit one original and two copies of their bid which shall be sealed in an envelope and marked on the cover package outside as follows: *“PORT OF SAIPAN BERTH 103 REPAIRS, CPA-SS-001-17”* and submitted no later than **2:00 P.M. (CHST), THURSDAY, MARCH 23, 2023**, to the Office of the Executive Director, 2nd floor of the Arrival Terminal at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport, at which time and place the sealed proposals will be publicly opened and read. Bidders are requested to minimize their company’s attendees to ensure social distancing.

The Project, in general, consists of Berth 103 Cavity Repairs including all associated work, all in accordance with the Plans and Specifications.

The Project is being financed by the Commonwealth Ports Authority. The contract award, if it is to be made, will be made within one hundred twenty (120) calendar days from the receipt of bids. CPA reserves the right to hold such bids in effect for one hundred eighty (180) calendar days from the date of bid opening.

A DVD containing the Contract Documents including plans, specifications and the bid schedule, may be obtained at the CPA Accounting Office, 2nd floor of the Departure Terminal at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport, upon the payment of **TWO HUNDRED U.S. DOLLARS (\$200.00)** for each set of plans and documents in electronic form (DVD). The payment is nonrefundable unless this notice to bidders is cancelled. Payment shall be made in cash, credit card, cashier’s check or U.S. postal money order, made payable to the Commonwealth Ports Authority. Bidders should notify CPA’s point of contact mentioned below immediately if there are issues retrieving the files on the DVD and are to verify all information using the specification table of contents and the index of drawings.

A pre-bid conference will be held at CPA’s Capt. George Fleming Memorial Building Conference Room at the Port of Saipan, located in Lower Base on the island of Saipan in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), at **10:00 A.M. (CHST), FRIDAY, MARCH 10, 2023**, to explain and clarify any questions regarding this project. Attendance is not mandatory. A site visit will follow the pre-bid conference. Bidders are requested to minimize their company’s attendees to ensure social distancing.

Questions should be submitted in writing to the CPA Executive Director’s Office, 2nd floor of the Arrival Terminal at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport or emailed to Ms. Wendi L. Prater, Executive Assistant/Project Manager at wprater@cnmiports.com at least ten (10) days prior to the bid opening date; with the exception of extension requests which have no deadline. Responses to all questions and requests for information will be provided to all bidders who purchased a DVD and attended the pre-bid conference.

Bidders shall use the bid schedule form furnished by the Commonwealth Ports Authority on the DVD. Each bidder must also supply all supplemental information required in the specifications.

The contract period for construction of the project in its entirety shall be **FOUR HUNDRED TWENTY (420) calendar days**. Liquidated damages in the amount of **FIVE HUNDRED U.S. DOLLARS PER CALENDAR DAY (\$500.00)** shall be assessed the Contractor for each calendar day that the completion of the Project is delayed beyond the contract completion date without approved excuse.

The apparent low bidder will be subject to a thorough and comprehensive review of its qualifications and Bid Documents to ensure that they are “responsive and responsible.” This review will include, but is not necessarily limited to previous project experience, financial capabilities, quality of equipment and personnel, and bonding and insurance. If the apparent low bidder is found not to be “responsive or responsible”, their bid will be rejected and the next lowest bidder will be evaluated for qualifications.

The Commonwealth Ports Authority reserves the right to reject any or all bid proposals submitted for: (a) any of the reasons set forth in this Notice to Bidders; or (b) any of the reasons set forth in the CPA Procurement Rules and Regulations regarding bid rejection or cancellation; (c) any calculation error made in the bid schedule or mis-enter of the quantity of line item; or (d) sufficient justification exists that awarding the project contract would not be in the best interest of CPA. CPA further reserves the right to waive any defects in said bids if in its sole opinion to do so would be in CPA’s best interest.

Each bid shall be accompanied by either a bid bond by a U.S. Treasury listed or CPA approved surety company, a certified check, or a cashier’s check in the amount not less than ten percent (10%) of the bid price. Checks shall be made payable to the Commonwealth Ports Authority.

All mechanics and laborers for this procurement project shall be paid no less than the minimum wage rate established by the CNMI or the U.S. Secretary of Labor, whichever is higher. A copy of the Department of the Federal Labor Wage Rate Determination is included in Section GP 70-26 of the specifications. The bidder shall take into account minimum wage increases that may be imposed in the CNMI over the life of the Contract and include associated costs in the bid proposal. The EEO requirements, labor provisions, and wage rates are included in the specifications.

The Commonwealth Ports Authority, in accordance with the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (78 Stat. 252, 42 USC §§ 2000d to 2000d-4) and the Regulations, hereby notifies all bidders or offerors that it will affirmatively ensure that any contract entered into pursuant to this advertisement, disadvantaged business enterprises will be afforded full and fair opportunity to submit bids in response to this invitation and will not be discriminated against on the grounds of race, color, or national origin in consideration for an award.


By submitting a bid/proposal under this solicitation, the bidder or offeror certifies that neither it nor its principals are presently debarred or suspended by any Federal department or agency from participation in this transaction.

In addition to the above, all bidders shall comply with all local and Federal requirements under this procurement.

FOR THE COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY:

/s/ CHRISTOPHER S. TENORIO
Executive Director

Date: February 8, 2023



COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION

INVITATION FOR BIDS

CUC-IFB-23-016

SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF BACKHOES AND TRENCHER FOR THE ISLANDS OF SAIPAN, TINIAN AND ROTA

The Office of the Executive Director for the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids for the supply and delivery of five (5) backhoes and one (1) trencher for the islands of Saipan, Tinian and Rota, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to assist with daily operations for the CUC Water and Wastewater systems.

This project is grant funded from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and the Department of the Interior Office of Insular Affairs (DOI-OIA).

Prospective Bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of \$200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked *“CUC-IFB-23-016, Supply and Delivery of Backhoes and Trencher for the Islands of Saipan, Tinian and Rota”* to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on March 7, 2023** at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before submission deadline. Late submissions and conditional offers will not be considered.

A Bid Guarantee of fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier’s check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers’ questions, concerns and qualification should be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI’s Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI’s Insurance Code.*

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor’s preparation of a bid or supply under the contract. The IFB does not commit CUC to award a contract, to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of the bid under this request, or to procure or contract for goods. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed as per the CUC Procurement Regulations.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from registered Proponents and must be submitted in writing **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on February 24, 2023**, to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email manny.sablan@cucgov.org and Christie Sablan at christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and waive any defects in the said bids, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids submitted shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Exercise Agile Reaper 23-1 kicks off in Guam, Tinian



Airman 1st Class Khyrese Roberts, 525th Aircraft Maintenance Unit assistant dedicated crew chief, sends off an F-22A Raptor prior to departure for Agile Reaper 23-1 at Kadena Air Base, Japan, March 1, 2023.

AIRMAN 1ST CLASS TYLIR MEYER

By **TECH. SGT. HAILEY STAKER**
JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

ANDERSEN AIR FORCE BASE, Guam—The 3rd Air Expeditionary Wing from Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, kicked off Exercise Agile Reaper 23-1 in Guam and Tinian on March 1.

AR 23-1 is the 3rd AEW's effort to exercise Agile Combat Employment, rehearse capabilities in an operationally relevant environment and to provide air dominance, global mobility and command and control in the Indo-Pacific region.

"Agile Reaper shows how the 3rd Wing and 673d Air

Base Wing are taking action in exercising our capabilities and providing combat ready forces to this region," said Lt. Gen. David Nahom, commander, Alaskan North American Defense Region, Alaskan Command, and the Eleventh Air Force. "Strategic movement into and throughout the INDO-PACOM region requires a well-defended strategic location—Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands. The work our 3rd Wing is putting in to exercise in an operationally relevant environment will make us more capable and ready to defend our homeland."

Throughout the weeklong exercise, F-22 Raptors assigned to the 525th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron, Kadena Air Base, Japan, will fly sorties from locations within the Northern Mariana Islands in a first for the aircraft. "This is the first time F-22s have ever been on this island," said Jammer, the 525th EFS commander. "As we go through these training scenarios, we're collecting data and establishing tactics, techniques and procedures to further inform how we as a force fly, fight and win in a modern, contested environment."

ACE exercises like AR 23-1 train airmen to operate from different locations with varying levels of capacity and support to emphasize the ability to deploy, survive, operate, maneuver, sustain and regenerate.

During this exercise, maintenance personnel and aircrew operate out of Tinian while



Members of the 525th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron, Kadena Air Base, Japan, disembark from a C-17 Globemaster III assigned to the 517th Airlift Squadron, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, after landing at the Tinian International Airport, Northern Mariana Islands, March 1, 2023.

TECH. SGT. HAILEY STAKER



Tech. Sgt. Jordan Laughlin, the fuels distribution section chief assigned to the 3rd Air Expeditionary Wing, briefs his fuels distribution operators on refueling operations during Exercise Agile Reaper 23-1 at the Tinian International Airport, Northern Mariana Islands, March 1, 2023.

TECH. SGT. HAILEY STAKER

airlift and refueling aircraft support operations from Andersen Air Force Base and Kadena AB.

"Our main objective with Agile Reaper is to test our expeditionary skills in an operationally relevant environment. I want our team as close to a contested, degraded and operationally limited environment as possible," said Col. Kevin "Jinx" Jamieson, commander, 3rd Air Expeditionary Wing. "I'm incredibly humbled at how much we've accomplished so far. This exercise will help us practice and validate new ways to project combat ready forces to this region."

Airmen must have diverse skills that enable them to operate in a contested, degraded, and operationally limited environment. From 10 degrees and snowing, to 90 and raining, airmen from the 3rd AEW will use AR 23-1 to practice and validate new ways to deploy, maneuver, and project power.

"To move aircraft and personnel from JBER Alaska to Guam and Tinian requires a huge team effort," said Jamieson. "Our partnerships with the 673rd Air Base Wing, 176th Wing, and 477th Fighter Group at JBER, working the air refueling support from Fairchild's 92d Air Refueling Wing, 18th Wing, our 36th Wing hosts here in Guam, our 525th Fighter Squadron F-22s coming from Kadena, mobility airlift support from the 15th Wing in Hawaii and the 613th Air Operations Cen-

ter...this is a monumental task made possible through strong relationships."



Rowdy, left, an F-22 Raptor pilot assigned to the 525th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron, Kadena Air Base, Japan, catches up with senior airman Alexander Blum-Ramos, right, a crew chief assigned to the 525th EFS, after landing during Exercise Agile Reaper 23-1 at the Tinian International Airport, Northern Mariana Islands, March 1, 2023.

TECH. SGT. HAILEY STAKER



Blake Manibusan, the Aerial Operation Area second in command for the Tinian International Airport, Northern Mariana Islands, marshals a C-17 Globemaster III assigned to the 517th Airlift Squadron, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, after landing for Exercise Agile Reaper 23-1 at Tinian International Airport, Northern Mariana Islands, March 1, 2023.

TECH. SGT. HAILEY STAKER



TECH. SGT. HAILEY STAKER

Airman 1st Class Arion White, front, a fuels distribution operator assigned to the 3rd Air Expeditionary Wing, and Tech. Sgt. Jordan Laughlin, back, the fuels distribution section chief assigned to the 3rd Air Expeditionary Wing, carry a fuel hose to refuel an F-22 Raptor assigned to the 525th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron, Kadena Air Base, Japan, during Exercise Agile Reaper 23-1 at the Tinian International Airport, Northern Mariana Islands, March 1, 2023.



Jammer, the commander of the 525th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron, Kadena Air Base, Japan, watches as an F-22 Raptor assigned to the 525th EFS is guided to park during Exercise Agile Reaper 23-1 at the Tinian International Airport, Northern Mariana Islands, March 1, 2023.

TECH. SGT. HAILEY STAKER



**CNMI DEPARTMENT
OF COMMERCE**



PUBLIC NOTICE

The CNMI Department of Commerce, Central Statistics Division is preparing to conduct the CNMI 2023 Prevailing Wage Study (PWS) survey to begin on March 01, 2023 and notifies all businesses and employers in the CNMI to log on to the CSD Data Collection Portal and complete the PWS survey questionnaire.

All businesses and employers (Private & Public), with and with no employees, are urged to complete this survey before March 15, 2023.

Data Collection Portal Link:
<http://cnmidata.commerce.gov.mp>

Opinion

Hafa Adail

Saipan Tribune

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AP The Associated Press

Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

From the lab or nature, look to China for COVID's origin

That the Department of Energy's Office of Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence now believes that the deadly plague we call COVID-19 escaped from a Chinese research lab in Wuhan more than three years ago only heightens the need to keep looking for the origin of the virus. With a worldwide death toll approaching 7 million, more than 1 million of them in the United States, the true answer must be found if at all possible.

The Beijing Communist government's furious denial should not dissuade legitimate investigation by intelligence services. The U.S. intelligence community, of which the Energy Department is a component, itself is split. Energy puts its lab leak theory at "low confidence," while the FBI agrees, but with "moderate confidence."

China's secrecy from the first outbreak and since has hampered learning the truth.

However several other U.S. intelligence agencies (there are 18 of them in total), peg COVID-19 to a natural transmission from a wild animal to humans, likely from one of the live "wet markets" in Wuhan, where the disease first emerged.

The World Health Organization review, ruling out any direct human cause to COVID-19's beginning, was heavily influenced by China and must be viewed with appropriate skepticism. Furthermore, China's secrecy from the first outbreak and since has hampered learning the truth.

Where the U.S. spies are united is that, according to their declassified report, "We judge the virus was not developed as a biological weapon." So, goes the thinking, if it was a lab mishap it stemmed from the studying of the virus, with most of the agencies concluding "that SARS-CoV-2 probably was not genetically engineered." And they believe that "China's officials did not have foreknowledge of the virus before the initial outbreak of COVID-19 emerged."

What is certain is that COVID-19 did first come from China, be it a wet market or a lab, and that's where the answers are, if they haven't been covered up or destroyed.

Millions of dead around the world can't be saved. But there will be future pandemics, and avoiding the next one is everyone's responsibility, including President Xi Jinping and the Politburo.

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How forgotten Black history has been recovered by rogue scholars

I teach history, but I am not a historian—at least not in a traditional sense. I've defended no dissertations and have no Ph.D. But for the past decade, I have been poring over primary source documents, conducting interviews and compiling my findings to create an ever-evolving historical archive.

That places me within a long legacy of Black public historians and citizen scholars constructing Black history beyond academia, away from the claustrophobic confines of the ivory tower. Black independent scholars have always existed, driven by a desire to recover lost narratives—while redefining what it means to be a historian.

Institutional racism has long excluded Black scholars from the academy. Out of almost 2,000 history doctorates awarded by 1935, only six were given to Black people. The desegregation of public schools in the 1950s, '60s and '70s included colleges and universities, meaning that until that era, Black students were locked out of many of these institutions. As a result, the white men who maintained a monopoly on the subject have dictated a vast swath of American history. These have been the authorities gatekeeping our understanding of the past. They have had the most years of access to backroom archives, special papers and original documents and been best-positioned to get lucrative grants and funding from endowments.

Even in more recent years, within a still largely unequal history field, it is primarily white scholars who gain access to subscription-only services distributing millions of digital books, documents, photos and journals for research. Where they find an open door to the past, Black scholars have often stood keyless, in front of a closed door with a deadbolt.

Yet rogue scholars have still managed to uncover hidden history. One was Arturo Alfonso Schomburg, who in the early 20th century became one of his era's most meticulous curators and scholars—and did so without an advanced degree. Eventually, his prolific collection laid the foundation for the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, currently part of the New York Public Library. One longtime director of that center said that Schomburg amassed a collection in part to dispel white myths of Black inferiority and to show that Black people had history and culture, which had largely been ignored. Despite having to work in segregated libraries, Schomburg and many of his peers built on one another to create an interconnected Black historical universe.

So much has changed, and yet so much has stayed the same. One disheartening analysis found that only 7% of U.S. history professors are Black, and that Black scholars have the lowest average salary compared to any other racial demo-

By JERMAINE FOWLER
Los Angeles Times

Jermaine Fowler is the founder and managing editor of The Humanity Archive and author of the forthcoming book The Humanity Archive: Recovering the Soul of Black History from a Whitewashed American Myth.



graphic of history professors. This speaks to the ways Black voices continue to be marginalized despite our being part of America's cultural fabric.

The challenges don't stop there. Black historians have often found the support missing within traditional history departments in the African American studies field—which is under assault, with Florida rejecting the College Board's Advanced Placement African American studies class and other states now scrutinizing the course.

Such barriers could have caused many to give up—but curses can also be gifts. Exclusion unintentionally created space for Black public historians to tell history on their own terms, without the restrictions and limitations—including misconceptions about Black stories—imposed by the profession. As a result, these historians have fostered a direct and authentic engagement with those whose stories they are documenting. My research focuses on telling the stories of historically unheard people often left out of U.S. narratives. While working with schools, public institutions such as libraries and museums and directly with communities, I have seen firsthand how learning about the past can enrich people's lives.

The stories told in textbooks, museums and other educational materials can profoundly impact how we view ourselves and our society. If Black historians are not granted the recognition and support they need—and deserve—the historical record will remain incomplete, and our understanding of our collective past will remain limited.

This can be done by universities and other institutions funding and supporting community-based historical projects, creating more inclusive academic departments that recognize and celebrate Black historians' contributions, and promoting civic scholars' work through independent publishers and social media. Black public historians have already played a vital role in documenting the past. We should support these efforts to keep uncovering the rich stories of Black history—and to support the broader definition of a "historian" that they exemplify.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Tribune reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

‘Men who don’t cry...’

I found myself fighting back tears during the lead up activities to the governor and lieutenant governor signing a proclamation and proclaiming March as Developmental Disabilities Awareness month at a recent ceremony hosted by the Disability Network Partners in celebration. These weren’t tears of pain or even joy, mind you, but rather a kind of sudden rush of overwhelming love perhaps, like deep chills, that welled up through my spine and sprung a leak over my eyeballs; the common term might be that I was so “moved.” For full disclosure, I have become quite the soft, little crybaby in these waning years of a surprisingly full life, so I cry easily (albeit silently—on the inside, if you will—most of the time). I’ve come to know as well that tears, paradoxically like a hard laugh, can be contagious.

I remember very clearly the day I finally realized and had to admit that the once hardened walls of my heart had thinned, or rather, softened. I also know now that having children was the primary cause. Yes, my kids made me soft and I’ve grown softer each day (in more ways than one I might add) since I held my firstborn for the first time. It was sometime in the year 2000, a little less than a year after my second daughter was born. I was in the movie theater with a few friends watching *Castaway*, a Tom Hanks movie, when during a now famous scene in which the main character’s best friend, Wilson, drifts away from him in the ocean... “Wilson!” he shouted desperately. “Wiiiilson!” he cried over and over until he was too exhausted to cry anymore, with Wilson eventually disappearing into a vast open sea. At that point my friend nudged me and said, “I know you’re not f***** crying, Jimbo!” I guess in the reflective light of the movie he could see the glistening of my eyeballs, the ugly batting of my eyelids at a hundred blinks per second and finally the awkward attempts to wipe my face without looking like I was wiping away tears. It’s true. I was literally crying—full blown tears rolling down my face—over Wilson floating away. And, for those who don’t know the movie, Wilson was a volleyball. Not a lovable cartoon volleyball character, but an actual Wilson brand volleyball on which the Tom Hanks character had painted something that resembled a face, barely. For empha-

sis, I was full-fledged, ugly crying over a volleyball. I walked out of that movie knowing that something in me had changed and—excuse the misogynistic reference here, it’s what I thought in that moment—I felt like a “chick.” My feminine side had risen to the top and finally boiled over. I still blame my kids. True story.

And so, it was in the moment of the “family advocate testimonials” impaneled by the Nicholas, Aquino, and Hocog-Manglona families at the proclamation ceremony that I was nearly in tears again. I managed on the day to keep it all inside, but was deeply moved nonetheless. There was something particularly touching about the sight of a burly man’s man (a Micronesian man, no less) reduced to tears even for a brief second at the preponderance of love and affection that he holds for his son and which the rest of his family share for each other. It occurred to me, too, that a common theme for the families who were there to share their stories of a life with challenges in raising and growing with a child who has a developmental disability was “love.” The love shown by all the parents on the panel felt tangible and seemed to engulf the room; it certainly put a spell on me. In each of the stories shared, the protagonist was the parents’ love and refusal to accept less for their children because they had been branded with a so-called disability. One father admitted that, “I really don’t like the word disability. My son has challenges, not disabilities. ...We all have challenges and we can work through them together.” The mother in this case talked about not even telling their son he had a disability—that he would be held accountable to his growth with the same commitment shown for their children without a diagnosis. In all cases, the parents did whatever they had to in order to give their kids the best possible outcome for him or herself. By all accounts, each of the kids (adults now) has far exceeded the expectations of what others (aside from their parents) ever believed. “If we allow our minds to believe that it’s possible, then we can do it” (Unknown).

“There are more than 6,000,000 individuals with developmental disabilities that reside in the U.S. mainland and its territories. These individuals have the same hopes and

MY GLASS CUP

By JIM RAYPHAND

Special to the Saipan Tribune

James M. Rayphand is the director of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and is a former executive director of the Northern Marianas Protection & Advocacy Systems, Inc.



dreams as all CNMI residents—to be self-determined, work and earn a living, practice their faith, and be included in their community. People with developmental disabilities have unique abilities and experiences that contribute to our islands’ rich diversity and heritage, just like all residents. Throughout our history, people with developmental disabilities have utilized their unique abilities to make our islands a better place for all.”

It easy for people looking in from the outside to judge or at least presume to know what families with kids who have developmental disabilities must go through. More often than not, the focus is on how hard life must be. No doubt many endure challenges that do not apply to their peers who do not have kids with disabilities; however, in the nearly 25 years I’ve had the pleasure of working with families and the community of people with varying abilities, what has become abundantly clear is that the challenges and frustrations (while very real and often painful) only serve to strengthen their capacity for love. It’s moments like the other day when I get to witness what may have once been tears of pain flow freely as tears of pure love that make the work of supporting people with disabilities worthwhile.

After subduing the tears welling up through his voice, the gentleman “Dad” recalled a story of a five-star general crying in an interview with Barbara Walters and being asked if he felt any kind of way about crying on national television, to which he responded, “Men who don’t cry scare me.”

Me too, general. Men who don’t cry scare me too; in fact, I scare myself when I don’t cry.

It shouldn’t require brain surgery to see nurses are underpaid

Having recently returned from sitting bedside with a surgical patient at a local hospital for two straight weeks, I can faithfully attest to some basic truths about modern medicine. First, it’s not Club Med. In many ways, it’s like having an inquisitive, yet psychotic, toddler armed with a blood pressure cuff, an instant-read thermometer and a needle staring at you 24/7. The moment the little guy sees you might start to be relaxing, he’s certain to poke and prod you with one or more of the above. Second, the food is terrible. It’s a bad sign when the medical staff can’t hide their disdain. (Never, ever order the vegetarian lasagna. Ever. You’ll thank me later.) And finally, through the blurry sweep of major surgery, intensive care, dozens of intravenous bags, lots and lots of drugs, doctors, physician assistants, residents and techs, the pain, the frustration and tedium, you will soon discover an unchanging truth: Nurses are the greatest thing going in the hospital. God bless them.

Make no mistake, I was not predisposed to praising nurses. They don’t run in my family. They aren’t among my closest friends. Until recently, I’d mostly thought of them as kind of minor functionaries in the context of a primary care provider. They put you on the scale, take your height, check your blood pressure and warn you that the doctor is coming soon. But in a hospital, their impact is profound. They are the ones checking on the patient on a regular basis, they are the first to perceive changes, good or bad, in the recovery process. They deal with the mundane but must also recognize the alarming. And they are there for 12-hour shifts. You may see your surgeon once or twice a day, or a resident once in a while. But the nurses and techs are your caregivers, your lifeline, your comfort, your allies.

In case you haven’t heard, there’s a nursing shortage going on. It’s thought that increasing demand for all types of nurses—caused in part, by an aging U.S. population and expanded access to health care as well as retirements, turnover and burnout in the nursing profession—have hit many communities quite hard. Government and the health care industry are working on solutions including expanded recruitment and training slots. Even billionaires are contributing to nursing schools on a regular basis and funding scholarships. But as someone who has just left ground zero (well, a ground zero anyway), and who asked each and every nurse what should be done to address the crisis, I can tell you they all had the exact same thought: Pay nurses what they deserve. See? Sometimes, health care problem are complex. Other times, they are actually quite straightforward.

I don’t claim to be an expert in these matters. I know health care dollars are precious, and the business of running a hospital is mind-bogglingly complex with daily decisions that can literally mean life or death. I am grateful to all who cared for my spouse, from the folks who cleaned the floors to the individual who ran through several wards to find her medication after the pharmacy had closed. But I must tell you that as I hovered over my wife after brain surgery, an enterprise for which we were advised to get our wills written and filed away, it was almost always a nurse who sought to make the situation better. And so we got to know them very well.

Many of these nurses admitted their jobs could be stressful but loved the work anyway. Some are what’s known as “travel nurses” having moved to Baltimore from all over the country after signing short-term contracts for higher pay. Many were quite young and only had a few years of hospital experi-

By PETER JENSEN

The Baltimore Sun

Peter Jensen is an editorial writer at The Baltimore Sun.



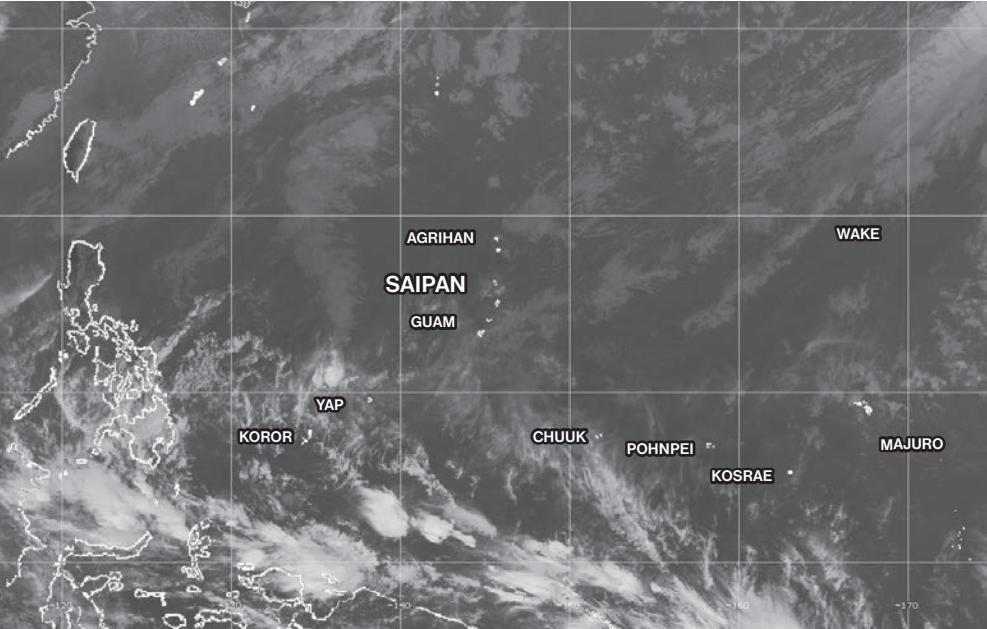
ence. To a man and woman, they fretted about making ends meet, something that the surgeons and administrators in this particular hospital probably don’t have to worry about much.

Listen, I know there are good nurses and some who probably aren’t so gifted. Every profession works that way (one even imagines somewhere in the hospital basement there’s a line cook who might have made a decent vegetarian lasagna once before they chose a life of culinary torture). And no doubt the United States needs to expand its nursing school capacity. But how about doing what nurses do regularly and actually listen to the people involved? The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics has estimated that the median registered nurse pay in this country is \$77,600 a year or roughly \$37.31 an hour. From actuaries to veterinarians, there are plenty of college-educated professions on the BLS inventory that pay much better—but few of such consequence to those ailing, stressed-out and, yes, somewhat frightened patients and their husbands who have never before spent two days in a hospital, let alone two weeks.

Give the nurses a major raise. You’ll be glad you did, I promise.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN									
TODAY		SATURDAY		SUNDAY		MONDAY		TUESDAY	
Isolated showers. Mostly sunny		Partly sunny		A 30 percent chance of showers. Partly sunny		A chance of showers. Mostly cloudy		A chance of showers. Mostly cloudy	
82°	75°	82°	76°	82°	76°	82°	76°	82°	77°
YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE									



PICTURE TIME: 8:22 AM, THURSDAY, MARCH 1, 2023

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Satellite and radar show cloudy skies and isolated showers mainly over Guam and Rota coastal waters this morning. Buoys within the coastal waters show combined seas of 9 to 12 feet overnight.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA			▲▼°F
Guam and Rota	Showers	85° / 76°	
Palau	Scattered Thunderstorms	83° / 76°	
Yap	Mostly Cloudy	83° / 76°	
Chuuk	Partly Cloudy	85° / 79°	
Pohnpei	Partly Cloudy	87° / 78°	
Kosrae	Partly Cloudy	86° / 80°	
Majuro	Partly Cloudy	85° / 80°	

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:33 AM	6:24 PM
Saturday	6:32 AM	6:25 PM
Sunday	6:32 AM	6:25 PM
Monday	6:31 AM	6:25 PM
Tuesday	6:30 AM	6:25 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	3:33 AM	2:55 PM
Saturday	-	4:20 AM	3:47 PM
Sunday	-	5:03 AM	4:38 PM
Monday	-	5:42 AM	5:27 PM
Tuesday	-	6:19 AM	6:16 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE			▲▼°F
Auckland	Mostly Cloudy	75° / 63°	
Beijing	Sunny	67° / 33°	
Hong Kong	Sunny	69° / 61°	
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy/Wind	77° / 70°	
London	Cloudy	47° / 37°	
Los Angeles	Sunny	62° / 43°	
Manila	Partly Cloudy	87° / 73°	
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	70° / 56°	
Miami	Partly Cloudy	80° / 75°	
New York	Showers	58° / 35°	
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	51° / 38°	
Paris	Mostly Sunny	50° / 33°	
Busan	Mostly Sunny	55° / 41°	
Rome	Showers	59° / 39°	
Salem	Scattered Thunderstorms	76° / 65°	
San Francisco	Partly Cloudy	56° / 43°	
Seoul	Sunny	52° / 32°	
Tokyo	Sunny	54° / 42°	
Washington, DC	Showers	67° / 42°	

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY			FEET
6:50 AM	High Tide	1.53	
12:03 PM	Low Tide	1.11	
4:26 PM	High Tide	1.43	
-	-	-	

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF FEBRUARY 1, 2023

DEPARTURES			
SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)			
UA117	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily
SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)			
UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5
GUAM-MANILA (MNL)			
PR 111	5:30AM	7:25AM	Daily
UA193	7:55PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau
UA183	8:00PM	9:50PM	Daily
SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)			
UA117/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam
UA117/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau
OZ624/701	3:50PM	10:35AM+1	3,6 via Incheon
SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)			
TW308	3:15AM	6:55AM	1, 4, 5, 7
TW9308	3:50AM	7:20AM	1, 4, 5, 7
OZ624	3:50PM	7:40PM	3, 6
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

ARRIVALS			
GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN			
UA174	8:00AM	8:46AM	Daily
NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN			
UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7
MANILA (MNL)-GUAM			
PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA189	12:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6
MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN			
UA189/174	12:40AM	8:46AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:46AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:46AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
OZ704/623	11:50PM	2:20PM+1	2, 5 via Incheon
INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN			
OZ623	9:00AM	2:20PM	3, 6
7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
TW307	8:45PM	2:15AM+1	3, 4, 6, 7
TW9307	9:20PM	2:50AM+1	3, 4, 6, 7

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T*Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. (The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

MARIANAS SOUTHERN AIRWAYS

INITIAL DAILY FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF FEBRUARY 13, 2023

SAIPAN TO TINIAN		
DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
11:20 A.M.	11:38 A.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
3:40 P.M.	3:58 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
9:40 A.M.	9:58 A.M.	6,7
SAIPAN TO ROTA		
DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
7:20 A.M.	8:00 A.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
5:00 P.M.	5:40 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
7:40 A.M.	8:20 A.M.	6,7
SAIPAN TO GUAM		
DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
12:00 P.M.	1:00 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
2:00 P.M.	3:00 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
7:00 P.M.	8:00 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
11:00 A.M.	12:00 P.M.	6,7
ROTA TO GUAM		
DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
8:20 A.M.	8:55 A.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
4:25 P.M.	5:00 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5

TINIAN TO SAIPAN		
DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
12:00 P.M.	12:18 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
4:20 P.M.	4:38 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
10:20 A.M.	10:38 A.M.	6,7
ROTA TO SAIPAN		
DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
10:20 A.M.	11:00 A.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
6:00 P.M.	6:40 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
8:40 A.M.	9:20 A.M.	6,7
GUAM TO SAIPAN		
DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1:30 P.M.	2:30 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
5:30 P.M.	6:30 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
9:00 P.M.	10:00 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
12:30 P.M.	1:30 P.M.	6,7
GUAM TO ROTA		
DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
9:25 A.M.	10:00 A.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
3:30 P.M.	4:05 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7)

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JUNE 1, 2022

SAIPAN TO ROTA			
FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30	9:00	Daily
1302	11:00	11:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
1302	12:00	12:30	Tues/Thurs/Sat/Sun
1303	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM			
LIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	12:00	12:30	Mon/Wed/Fri

SAIPAN TO TINIAN			
FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Daily
1208	14:00	14:15	Daily
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN			
FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	13:00	13:30	Tues/Thurs/Sat/Sun
3102	14:00	14:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
3103	16:30	17:00	Daily

GUAM TO ROTA			
FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Mon/Wed/Fri

TINIAN TO SAIPAN			
FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Daily

Business

Plumeria Steakhouse introduces \$6.99 breakfast

By MARK RABAGO

mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

At a time when a dozen eggs costs north of \$6, Plumeria Steakhouse is making the impossible by introducing a \$6.95 breakfast menu with one of the bestsellers being its Plumeria Breakfast Plate.

General manager Steve Jang said they started the \$6.95 breakfast at the Beach Road, Garapan restaurant two months ago as a way of promoting Plumeria Steakhouse and at the same time giving back to the local community.

So far the bestsellers have been the aforementioned Plumeria Breakfast Plate, which is a bountiful island-style dish; different types of omelets, and of course you can't leave out America's favorite, good 'ole American Breakfast.

The Plumeria Breakfast Plate consists of steamed rice, bacon, eggs, spam, scrambled eggs, and your choice of sausage; while American Breakfast is made up of crispy bacon, sausage, toast and egg.

They also serve Spanish melet, which has fresh potato, white onions, and fresh parsley. The cheese variant comes with, of course, cheddar cheese, and white onions.

For sweet tooth out there, there's also banana crepe and French toast; and for health buffs Plumeria Steakhouse also has their Chef's Green Salad with their own secret house dressings. Vegetable omelet is made up of fresh potatoes, bell pepper, tomato, mushroom, and onions.

The \$6.95 breakfast menu also comes with unlimited coffee as well as the excellent service and the bon vibrant atmosphere that comes with dining at

Plumeria Steakhouse.

"It's not about making profit or not on our \$6.95 breakfast menu, but it's about extending hospitality to our local friends and relatives. I like the fact that a lot of people try it and they become repeat customers for lunch and dinner. I've also got to meet my old friends who I haven't seen for months or years when they come to try our new and affordable breakfast menu," said Jang.

Since unveiling their breakfast menu, Plumeria Steakhouse has enjoyed a full house nearly every day with the busiest days being Saturday and Sunday, where diners tend to spend more time enjoying their food because of the weekend.

Jang said that the \$6.99 breakfast menu has become so popular that they have to use the adjoining Ete Cafe to serve Plumeria Steakhouse customers.

As far as portions are concerned, Jang said Plumeria Steakhouse doesn't want to overwhelm customers with a loaded plate and it's something health-conscious diners appreciate.

"The comments I get from our customer is that it's not too large. It's not too small. It's just perfect. So whenever I see an empty plate, it makes me very happy."

Another bonus for introducing the \$6.99 breakfast menu is that Jang was able to hire more cooks and waitstaff and existing employees added work hours that translates to more dollars on their paychecks. That in turn means more money circulating in the local economy.



MARK RABAGO
Plumeria Steakhouse is located along Beach Road, right next to where the 1959 Bonanza Airplane is located.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Plumeria Steakhouse's ever popular island-style Plumeria Breakfast Plate.

Aside from getting the local crowd, Plumeria Steakhouse has also attracted its fair share of tourists to their breakfast offerings, especially tourists staying at guest houses or in bed & breakfasts around the Garapan area.

Jang also wants foodies to try out their 14-ounce sizzling New York Steak Angus Beef on special for only \$30. It's served every single day for lunch and/or dinner and comes with soup and salad.

Plumeria Steakhouse's \$6.95 breakfast menu is available

from 7am to 10:30am everyday with last order at 10:30am. They are also open for lunch from 11am to 2pm and dinner from 6pm to 10pm.

Jang added "BABL or buy American, buy local!"

Opened in June 2021, Plumeria Steakhouse is located along Beach Road, where the 1959 Bonanza Airplane is located. Look for the one with the airplane landmark in Garapan. For more information or for reservations, call (770) 233-5454 or check out Plumeria Steakhouse on Facebook.



MARK RABAGO

Plumeria Steakhouse was opened in June 2021 and serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

China looks to consumers to drive economic rebound

BEIJING (AP)—Chinese leader Xi Jinping's agenda for the annual meeting of the ceremonial legislature: Revive the economy by encouraging consumers to spend more now that severe anti-virus controls have ended, and install a government of loyalists to intensify Communist Party control over the economy and society.

Xi, China's most powerful figure in decades, has no formal role in the National People's Congress, which will convene a meeting of its full membership on Sunday. But he looms over every event: the 69-year-old awarded himself a third five-year term as party general secretary in October, possibly making himself leader for life.

The two-week gathering of 2,977 NPC members is the year's highest-profile political event, but its lawmaking work is limited to endorsing ruling party decisions. Its more important function is to provide a platform to publicize government plans and give members instructions to take home to cities and provinces.

Xi and other leaders say their priority is to reassure consumers and entrepreneurs it's time to spend and invest after restrictions that kept millions of people at home, temporarily shut down Shanghai and other industrial centers and wiped out jobs were lifted in December.

The economy faces challenges ranging from weak global

demand for exports and lingering U.S. tariff hikes in a feud over technology and security to curbs on access to Western processor chips due to security fears. At home, the workforce has been shrinking for more than a decade, putting pressure on an economy that still relies on labor-intensive industry.

Economic growth fell to 3% in 2022, the second-weakest level since at least the 1970s.

The ruling party needs to "fully release consumption potential," Xi said at the party's annual planning meeting, according to a text published Feb. 16.

Xi gave no details but said Beijing should encourage spending on electric cars and medical and elderly care, home

improvement, culture and sports. He warned at the December meeting that work "will be complicated."

A consumer-led rebound might take longer than stimulus spending or igniting a boom in real estate investment. But Chinese leaders are trying to avoid options that would push up debt they worry already is dangerous high.

Forecasters expect Premier Li Keqiang, the top economic official, to announce a growth target of 5% to 5.5% in a speech Sunday on plans for the year. Li, an advocate of free enterprise, is due to be replaced as premier at the congress after being sidelined as No. 2 party leader in October.

TikTok sets new default time limits for minors

By MICHELLE CHAPMAN
AP BUSINESS WRITER

TikTok said Wednesday that every account held by a user under the age of 18 will have a default 60-minute daily screen time limit in the coming weeks. The changes arrive during a period in which there are growing concerns among different governments about the app's security and ability to alter its algorithm to push certain posts.

The update also mirrors gaming rules imposed on minors in China, where TikTok's parent company ByteDance was formerly based. ByteDance now says it has no headquarters because it is a global business and that instead it has leaders in Singapore, New York and elsewhere managing its business. In 2021, Chinese authorities issued new rules that let minors play online games for only an hour a day

and only on Fridays, weekends and public holidays—an effort to curb internet addiction.

In the U.S., families have struggled with limiting the amount of time their children spend on the Chinese-owned video sharing app. According to the Pew Research Center, about two-thirds of Americans teens use TikTok.

Cormac Keenan, head of trust and safety at TikTok, said in a blog post Wednesday that when the 60-minute limit is reached, minors will be prompted to enter a passcode and make an "active decision" to keep watching. For accounts where the user is under the age of 13, a parent or guardian will have to set or enter an existing passcode to allow 30 minutes of extra viewing time once the initial 60-minute limit is reached.

Nation

Legal fight over student debt a prelude to political battle

WASHINGTON (AP)—Facing the possibility that the Supreme Court will reject President Joe Biden's plan for student loan forgiveness, the White House is aiming to turn the political heat toward Republicans while deflecting criticism from disappointed borrowers.

At stake is the loyalty of young, college-educated voters who are a critical part of the Democratic coalition that Biden is counting on to return him to the White House for a second term. And plenty of people are making sure he doesn't forget.

"The president still has the responsibility to ensure that we see this become a reality," said Wisdom Cole, national director of the NAACP Youth and College Division. "There are folks that are still suffering, and we want to ensure that they have the opportunity to see relief."

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Wednesday the president would make it clear to borrowers that "we have your back," but it's far from clear that the administration has a backup idea to cancel debt.

"We do not have another plan," she told reporters. "This is our plan. This is it."

In arguments this week, the court's conservative major-



AP
Student debt relief advocates gather outside the Supreme Court on Capitol Hill in Washington, Monday, Feb. 27, 2023.

ity appeared deeply skeptical of Biden's plan, which would slash federal student loan debt burdens through an executive order he signed last year.

In all, up to 43 million Americans could benefit. Out of the 26 million who have applied for relief, 16 million have been approved, according to adminis-

tration officials. However, all relief has been on hold amid legal challenges from Republicans.

"I'm confident we're on the right side of the law," Biden told reporters Wednesday at the White House. "I'm not confident about the outcome of the decision."

With a Supreme Court ruling

expected by summer, the White House is vigorously labeling culprits — and is sure to hit that message even harder if the court kills the program.

"Currently, the only thing blocking that plan is opponents of the plan suing us," Biden said Monday during a Black History Month reception at the

White House.

Foreshadowing what aides said would be his likely political message should the court overturn the plan, Biden criticized Republicans who sued and those in Congress who cheered them on.

"They're the same folks who had hundreds of thousands of

dollars, even millions of dollars, in pandemic relief loans forgiven," he said. "And many of them in Congress, by the way, Republicans, who voted for tax cuts (that) overwhelmingly benefit the wealthiest people in America, who are the people who paid to bring these suits."

Clearly, not everyone sees it that way. In fact, Republicans seem happy to fight over student debt relief, saying it's actually the Democrats' plan that is a "bailout for the wealthy."

"Biden's student loan cancellation unfairly punishes Americans who saved for college or made a different career choice," Ronna McDaniel, chairwoman of the Republican National Committee, said in a statement on Tuesday. "While hardworking families struggle with soaring costs, Biden is giving a handout to the rich, and voters see right through this desperate vote grab."

Some legal scholars have suggested that Biden's plan was always on shaky legal ground, and they've urged the administration to start over. However, White House officials insist they're still confident about their case.

One basis for that hope is that the justices may decide that the plaintiffs, which include several Republican-led states and two students, don't have legal standing to sue.

The administration also draws parallels to the tough questioning over the Affordable Care Act more than a decade ago. The court eventually upheld most of that law's provisions.

While publicly unwilling to entertain the prospects of a judicial brushback, Biden aides privately harbor the belief that for all the embarrassment, there is little to lose politically if the Supreme Court overturns the loan forgiveness program the president proposed and fought for.

Alex Murdaugh killed wife, son to buy time, prosecutor says

By JEFFREY COLLINS
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Alex Murdaugh's theft of millions of dollars was about to be revealed so he killed his wife and son to buy time to figure a way out, a prosecutor said Wednesday during closing arguments in the disgraced South Carolina attorney's murder trial.

Fearing his years of stealing from his law firm and clients would be exposed and hoping to maintain his lofty standing

in the community, Murdaugh killed his wife and younger son in the hopes it would make him a sympathetic figure and draw attention away from the missing money, prosecutor Creighton Waters told jurors. Aided by his knowledge of how criminal cases are constructed, he hatched a clever plan to make sure they were at the family's Colleton County property on the night they were killed, June 7, 2021, he said.

"The pressures on this man

were unbearable. And they were all reaching a crescendo the day his wife and son were murdered by him," Waters said. The defense will get to sum up its case on Thursday.

Murdaugh, 54, faces 30 years to life in prison if he is convicted of either murder count. Investigators said his 22-year-old son, Paul, was shot twice with a shotgun and his 52-year-old wife, Maggie, was shot four or five times with a rifle outside of the ken-

nels on their property.

Jurors began the day with a visit to the crime scene, where a pool reporter said at least one of them carefully inspected the door frame of a storage closet where Paul Murdaugh was standing when he was killed.

The key piece of evidence connecting Alex Murdaugh to the killings is a video Paul Murdaugh shot from the kennels about five minutes before he last used his cellphone. It took more than a year for

federal agents to hack into the young man's locked iPhone and find it.

Alex Murdaugh repeatedly told everyone, starting with the first investigator to respond to the killings, that he hadn't been at the kennels that night. But while testifying in his own defense, he admitted that he lied and that he had been there.

"Why in the world would an innocent, reasonable father and husband lie about that?"

ACROSS THE NATION

California high schooler fatally stabbed in classroom fight

SANTA ROSA, Calif. (AP)—A 16-year-old student involved in a fight at a Northern California high school was fatally stabbed Wednesday inside a classroom full of students, authorities said. Another student also suffered a stab wound and the suspect, a 15-year-old freshman, is in custody, according to Santa Rosa police. All three students are male. The two victims, both juniors at Montgomery High School, walked into an art classroom around 11:15 a.m. and began

fighting with the freshman, Santa Rosa Police Chief John Cregan said during a news conference. About 30 people were in the classroom. Teachers initially broke up the fight but the freshman pulled out a folding knife and stabbed the juniors, the chief said. The juniors went to the school nurse and both were conscious and alert when they were taken to the hospital, Cregan said. But one of the teens, who had three stab wounds to his upper body, died there. Owen Seiberling, a senior, told the San Francisco Chronicle that he was with the 16-year-old at the school office and tried to apply pressure

to his wounds.

Sheriff: Florida man fatally shot teenage daughter, 3 others

CANAVERAL GROVES, Fla. (AP)—A central Florida man was arrested Wednesday after fatally shooting his teenage daughter and three other people, authorities said. Domenico Gigante, 36, faces four counts of first-degree murder, Brevard County Sheriff Wayne Ivey said during a news conference. Deputies responded to a Canaveral Groves home early Wednesday morning after one of two surviving children had called a relative

for help, officials said. Canaveral Groves is located about 15 miles (24 kilometers) inland from Cape Canaveral. The deputies found the bodies of 15-year-old Kiarra Terwilliger and her mother Constance Terwilliger, who previously had been in a relationship with Gigante, Ivey said. The other two victims were identified as Glenda Terwilliger, 63, and Michael Andrew Watson, 36. Officials didn't give a motive for the slayings.

Hunter who killed pet dogs says he thought they were coyotes
DANBURY, Conn. (AP)—

A hunter who told authorities he killed and skinned what he thought were two coyotes, but later discovered they were a Connecticut family's pet German shepherds, has been criminally charged. During a hearing in Danbury Superior Court on Wednesday that drew dozens of people including the dogs' owners and animal rights advocates, Michael Konschak, 61, of Carmel, New York, said he was ashamed of what he did. "Please know that it was never my intent that morning to harm the victims' pets," he said. Police with the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental

Protection arrested Konschak in February on charges including tampering with evidence, forgery, interfering with a law enforcement officer and hunting-related violations. Animal rights advocates have urged authorities to add animal cruelty charges. Danbury State's Attorney David Applegate said the case is still being investigated and that more charges are possible. Konschak, whose lawyer called the dogs' deaths an accident, applied for a special probation program that could have resulted in the charges being erased, but a judge rejected that request Wednesday.

Asia

China dismisses FBI statement on COVID-19 lab leak theory

BEIJING (AP)—For the second day in a row, China on Wednesday dismissed U.S. suggestions that the COVID-19 pandemic may have been triggered by a virus that leaked from a Chinese laboratory.

Responding to comments by FBI Director Christopher Wray, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said the involvement of the U.S. intelligence community was evidence enough of the “politicization of origin tracing.”

“By rehashing the lab-leak theory, the U.S. will not succeed in discrediting China, and instead, it will only hurt its own credibility,” Mao said.

“We urge the U.S. to respect science and facts ... stop turning origin tracing into something about politics and intelligence, and stop disrupting social solidarity and origins cooperation,” she said.

In an interview with Fox News that aired Tuesday, Wray said, “The FBI has for quite some time now assessed that the origins of the pandemic are most likely a potential lab incident in (central China’s) Wuhan.”

“Here you are talking about a potential leak from a Chinese government-controlled lab,” Wray said.

Referring to efforts to trace the origin of the coronavirus, he added, “I will just make the observation that the Chinese government, it seems to me, has been doing its best to try



People wearing face masks walk past rows of lanterns at a tourist shopping street in Beijing, Tuesday, Feb. 28, 2023.

to thwart and obfuscate the work here, the work that we’re doing, the work that our U.S. government and close foreign partners are doing. And that’s unfortunate for everybody.”

On Tuesday, Mao pushed back at a report from the U.S. Department of Energy that assessed with “low confidence” that the virus that was first detected in Wuhan in late 2019 leaked from a nearby

government laboratory.

The report hasn’t been made public and officials in Washington stressed that U.S. agencies are not in agreement on the origin of the virus.

Mao on Tuesday insisted that China has been “open and transparent” in the search for the virus’ origins and has “shared the most data and research results on virus tracing and made important

contributions to global virus tracing research.”

A World Health Organization expert group said last year that “key pieces of data” to explain how the pandemic began were still missing. The scientists cited avenues of research that were needed, including studies evaluating the role of wild animals and environmental studies in places where the virus might have first spread.

The Associated Press has previously reported that the Chinese government was strictly controlling research into the origin of the pandemic that has killed more than 6.8 million people worldwide, clamping down on some work and promoting fringe theories that it could have come from outside the country.

Some scientists are open to the lab-leak theory, but many scientists believe the virus came from animals, mutated, and jumped to people, as has happened with other viruses in the past. Experts say the origin of the pandemic may not be known for many years — if ever.

US approves selling Taiwan munitions worth \$619M

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP)—The U.S. has approved more arms sales to Taiwan, including \$619 million worth of munitions for F-16 fighter jets, in a decision likely to be yet another point of friction between the U.S. and China, which claims the island as its own territory.

The State Department said in a statement Wednesday night it had approved sales of missiles to be used with the F-16s as well as equipment to support the missiles. That includes AGM-88 anti-radiation missiles, as well as air-to-air missiles and launchers.

Taiwan is unofficially supported by the U.S. and has a fleet of F-16s bought from the U.S. Tensions between China and the U.S. are at their highest level in years over American support for the self-governed island, including visits by high-ranking politicians, and a host of other issues, including a suspected Chinese spy balloon that crossed the U.S. before being shot down last month.



Taiwan’s F-16 fighter jets fly in close formation over President Office during National Day celebrations in front of the Presidential Building in Taipei, Taiwan, Oct. 10, 2021.

China considers Taiwan part of its territory to be brought under its control by force if necessary, and has been stepping up its military and diplomatic harassment. The sides split amid civil war in 1949, and China’s authoritarian Communist Party has never held sway over the island.

The United States is Taiwan’s main supplier of mili-

tary equipment, and China has objected to past sales with sanctions and other actions.

Once arms sales are approved, delivering them can take years, and Taiwan has cited consistent delays in receiving weapons it has purchased.

The arms will be provided by Raytheon Missiles and Defense and Lockheed Martin Corporation.

ASIAN BRIEFS

Over 26,000 evacuated as floods hit Malaysia again; 1 dead

KUALALUMPUR, Malaysia (AP)—Rescuers in boats retrieved families trapped on rooftops and hauled others to safety as villages and towns in parts of Malaysia were submerged in floodwaters, leading to over 26,000 people being evacuated as of Thursday. One person died when his car was swept away by floodwaters. The southern Johor state, neighboring Singapore, was the worst hit with some 25,000 people moved to relief centers in schools and community halls.

Malaysia leader alarmed by Myanmar’s refugee crisis

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said Wednesday that more than 200,000 refugees have fled Myanmar to his country and urgently called for new ways to persuade Myanmar’s ruling generals to resolve the civil conflict. Anwar and his host, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., also discussed the simmering South China Sea territorial disputes, which have embroiled their countries along with China and other coastal states, and ways to further

boost ties. “I did express my concern about the contentious, unresolved Myanmar issue which is affecting Malaysia adversely due to the huge number of refugees exceeding 200,000 people now in Malaysia,” Anwar said. Since the military takeover in Myanmar in 2021, security forces have killed thousands of civilians and army sweeps through the countryside have displaced more than 1 million people. In 2017, a brutal counterinsurgency campaign against the Muslim Rohingya minority drove more than 740,000 to flee across the border to Bangladesh, where they remain in refugee camps. Marcos reiterated the need for the enforcement of a five-point peace plan forged by leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, including Myanmar’s top general, but Anwar said new areas should be explored on “how Myanmar junta can be persuaded to work and collaborate as a team with the ASEAN and resolve the outstanding issues.”

S. Korea’s Yoon renews hopes for improved ties with Japan

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—South Korea’s president on Wednesday called Japan “a partner that shares the same universal values”

and renewed hopes to repair ties frayed over Japan’s colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula. Since taking office in May last year, President Yoon Suk Yeol has been pushing to mend the historical grievance with Japan and boost a Seoul-Tokyo-Washington security cooperation to better cope with increasing North Korean nuclear threats. In a televised speech marking the 1919 uprising against the Japanese colonizers, Yoon urged his people to remember what he called “patriotic martyrs who gave their all for our country’s freedom and independence during the dark days.” But he avoided mentioning any specific colonial wrongdoing as he explained why greater cooperation with Japan is needed. “Now, a century after the March First Independence Movement, Japan has transformed from a militaristic aggressor of the past into a partner that shares the same universal values with us and cooperates on issues of security, economy and global agendas,” Yoon said. “In particular, the trilateral cooperation among the Republic of Korea, the United States and Japan has become more important than ever to overcome the serious nuclear threats posed by North Korea and global polycrisis,” Yoon said.

World

UN says at least 50,000 killed in Turkey and Syria quakes

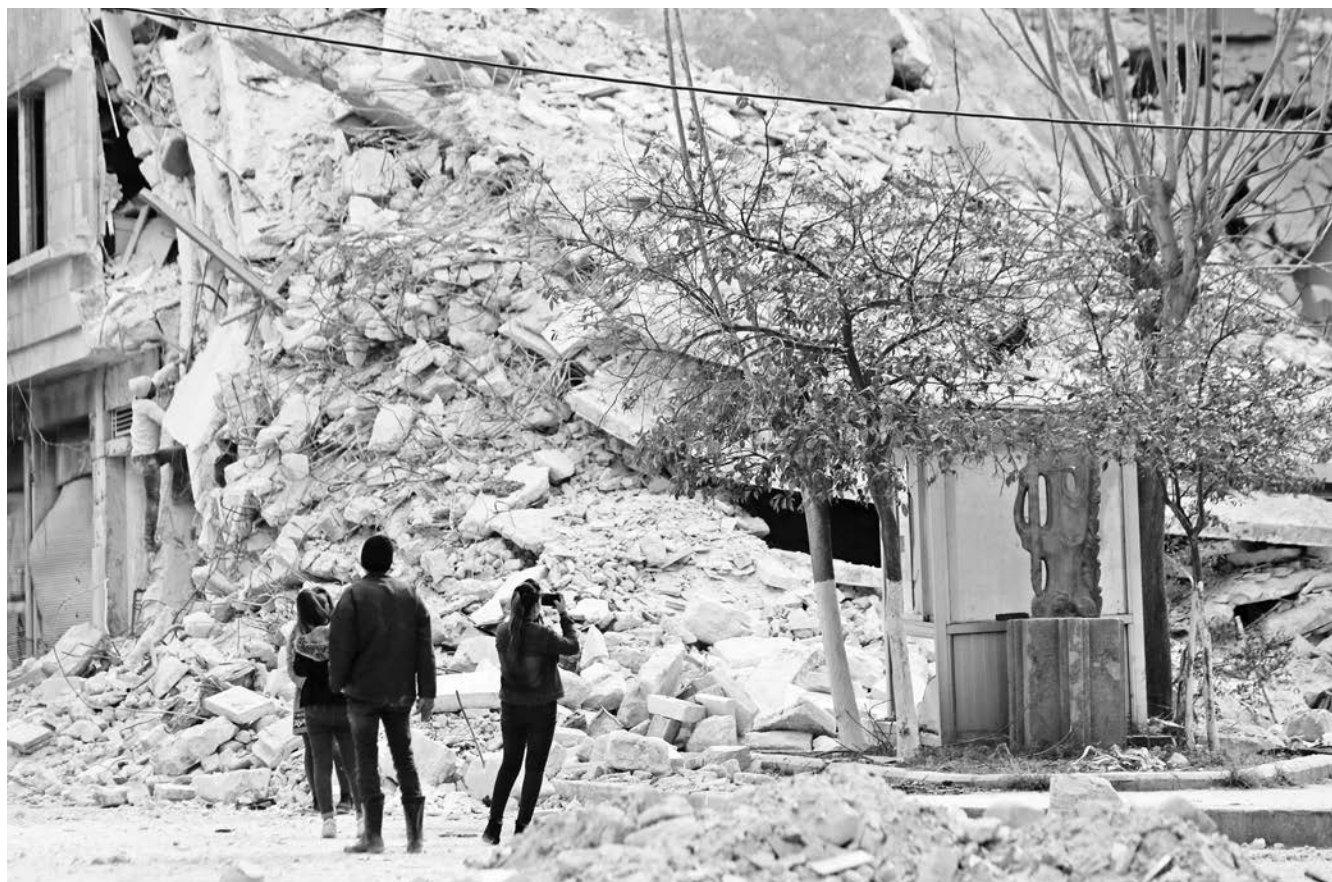
UNITED NATIONS (AP)—

The devastating earthquakes that struck Turkey and Syria have killed at least 50,000 people with many more injured, tens of thousands still missing and hundreds of thousands homeless, the U.N. humanitarian chief said Tuesday.

Martin Griffiths told the U.N. Security Council that three weeks after the magnitude 7.8 quake hit southern Turkey and northern Syria, followed by strong aftershocks including on Monday, the scale of the disaster is now much clearer: At least 44,000 people have been killed in Turkey and about 6,000 in Syria mainly in the rebel-held northwest.

The U.N. flash appeal for \$397.6 million to help Syrian quake victims is 42% funded and the \$1 billion appeal for victims in Turkey is just 7.4% funded — and this only covers emergency needs for the next three months, U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said Tuesday.

Griffiths told the council meeting focusing on Syria that before the earthquakes 15.3 million people — 70% of the



People stand by a building destroyed in recent earthquake in Aleppo, Syria, Monday, Feb. 27, 2023.

country's population — needed humanitarian assistance, and he said he saw during a post-quake visit that in harsh winter conditions entire neighbor-

hoods have been destroyed.

"Early assessments indicated 5 million people in Syria require basic shelter and non-food assistance," the under-

secretary-general for humanitarian affairs said. "In many areas, four to five families are packed into tents, with no special facilities for older people,

people with chronic illnesses or those with disabilities."

In addition, Griffiths told council members that hundreds of buildings are at high risk of collapsing, thousands more may need to be demolished, the risk of disease is growing amid a pre-quake

cholera outbreak, and the price of food and other essential items is climbing higher.

"Women and children face increased harassment, violence and risk of exploitation and the need for psychosocial support is great," he said.

Griffiths said machines need to be imported to Syria to clear rubble, equipment is needed for makeshift hospitals, and tools are needed to restore access to drinking water.

"The U.N. is working to address unintended obstacles generated by sanctions and counterterrorism laws, including procurement hurdles and delays for materials to repair essential infrastructure, medical supplies, or security equipment for our operations," he said.

As for Turkey the two very large earthquakes on Feb. 6 "caused an estimated \$34.2 billion in direct physical damages," the equivalent of 4% of the country's 2021 GDP, according to a World Bank rapid damage assessment report released Monday.

The report said recovery and reconstruction costs will be much larger, potentially twice as large, and that GDP losses associated to economic disruptions will also add to the cost of the earthquakes.

Ukraine official: Forces may pull out of key city of Bakhmut

KYIV, Ukraine (AP)—The Ukrainian military might pull troops back from the key stronghold of Bakhmut, an adviser to Ukraine's president said Wednesday in remarks that suggested Russia could capture the city that has become a symbol of Ukrainian resistance.

Kremlin forces have waged a bloody, months-long offensive to take Bakhmut, a city of salt and gypsum mines in eastern Ukraine that has become a ghost town.

"Our military is obviously going to weigh all of the options. So far, they've held the city, but if need be, they will strategically pull back," Alexander Rodnyansky, an economic adviser to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, told CNN. "We're not going to sacrifice all of our people just for nothing."

The battle for Bakhmut has come to embody Ukraine's determination as the city's defenders hold out against relentless shelling and Russian troops suffer heavy casualties.

Bakhmut lies in Donetsk province, one of four provinces Russia illegally annexed last fall. Moscow controls half of Donetsk province. To take the remaining half of that province, Russian forces must go through Bakhmut,

the only approach to bigger Ukrainian-held cities since Ukrainian troops took back Izium in Kharkiv province in September.

Analysts say the fall of Bakhmut would be a blow for Ukraine and offer tactical advantages to Russia, but would not prove decisive to the war's outcome.

Rodnyansky noted that Russia was using the Wagner Group's best troops to try to encircle the city. The private military company known for brutal tactics is led by Yevgeny Prigozhin, a rogue millionaire with longtime links to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Prigozhin said Wednesday that he had seen no signs of a Ukrainian withdrawal and that Kyiv has, in fact, been reinforcing its positions.

"The Ukrainian army is deploying additional troops and is doing what it can to retain control of the city," Prigozhin said. "Tens of thousands of Ukrainian soldiers are offering fierce resistance, and the fighting is getting increasingly bloody by day."

Ukraine's deputy defense minister, Hanna Maliar, said earlier this week that reinforcements had been dispatched to Bakhmut.

Ukrainian military analyst

Oleh Zhdanov told The Associated Press that the reinforcements may have been sent "to gain time" for strengthening Ukrainian firing lines on a hill in Chasiv Yar, 15 kilometers (9.3 miles) west of Bakhmut.

Zhdanov said the possible withdrawal of Ukrainian forces from Bakhmut "will not affect the course of the war in any way" because of the firing positions in Chasiv Yar.

Bakhmut is now partly encircled, and all roads, including the main supply route, are within range of Russian fire, Zhdanov said. The city lies in ruins and "no longer has strategic or operational significance."

"In Bakhmut, the Russians lost so many forces—soldiers and equipment—that this city has already fulfilled its function," Zhdanov said.

Recent drone footage showed the scale of devastation in the city, and Zelenskyy has described it as "destroyed."

Since invading Ukraine a year ago, Russia has bombarded various cities and towns it wanted to occupy. It also targeted Ukraine's power supply with missile strikes ahead of winter in an apparent attempt to weaken residents' morale.

While Western analysts have warned that warmer weather might give Moscow an oppor-

tunity to renew an offensive, Ukrainian officials nonetheless celebrated Wednesday as their traditional first day of spring.

Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba announced that his country had emerged from Putin's "winter terror."

"We survived the most difficult winter in our history," Kuleba wrote on Facebook.

Zelenskyy added in his nightly video address: "This winter is over. It was very difficult, and every Ukrainian felt this difficulty without exaggeration. But still, we were able to provide Ukraine with energy and heat."

If the war becomes a protracted conflict, Latvian Prime Minister Krisjanis Kariņš said that would demand a response from Kyiv's Western allies.

"This is potentially, for many years to come, where we will have to readapt our militaries, our military industry, to be able to step up to a much, much bigger challenge," Karins said after talks in Berlin with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

Meanwhile, one of Zelenskyy's top advisers, Mykhailo Podolyak, denied on Wednesday that Ukraine had used drones to attack Russian territory following official Russian statements that Ukraine had targeted infrastructure deep inside Russia.

In Egypt, government and poor struggle with troubled economy

CAIRO (AP)—A group of women stands in front of a vegetable vendor at a street market in one of Cairo's oldest neighborhoods, yelling in frustration.

"Every day there are new prices," one said. "When will this war end?" another shouted, cradling a baby in her arms.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine, now in its second year, has pushed up food and energy prices worldwide, adding another layer to Egypt's economic crisis. Soaring inflation, a severely weakened currency and other problems have followed decades of government mismanagement and broader disruptions, starting with the turmoil from the 2011 Arab Spring popular uprising, then years of militant attacks, followed by the coronavirus pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

The crisis has pushed many Egyptians out of the middle class, while the country's poor — about one-third of the population — are cutting back on life's essentials. Many are

asking how long they can survive like this.

Hany Hassan has found himself struggling to feed his four school-age children. His pay from his job as a bartender at a coffeehouse is buying less and less.

"This past year was the hardest in my life," said Hassan, 43, who earns roughly \$110 a month working 12-hour shifts seven days a week. "I am scared that one day I won't be able to feed the kids."

Annual inflation reached 26.5% in January, the highest in five years, with food prices in urban areas soaring 48%, according to official figures.

Many essentials including rice, cooking oil, bread and most recently, eggs, have all doubled in cost in Cairo's supermarkets. The prices of 1 kilogram (about two pounds) of chicken or other meat have almost doubled from a year ago, hitting 300 Egyptian pounds (roughly \$10) for meat and nearly 90 Egyptian pounds (roughly \$3), for chicken.

Off The Wall

Olive oil in coffee? New Starbucks line a curiosity in Italy

MILAN (AP)—Putting olive oil in coffee is hardly a tradition in Italy, but that didn't stop Starbucks interim CEO Howard Schultz from launching a series of beverages that do just that in Milan, the city that inspired his coffee house empire.

The coffee-olive oil concoction—echoing a keto-inspired trend of adding butter to coffee, only with a sugary twist—has provoked both amusement and curiosity among Italians.

Gambero Rosso, an Italian food and wine magazine, called the mixing of olive oil with coffee “a curious combination” but said it was reserving judgment, having not yet sampled the drinks.

It did praise featuring the staple of Italian kitchens as a main ingredient, not just a condiment. The magazine also noted the health benefits of consuming extra virgin olive oil, which some Italians do habitually straight from the bottle.

“Did we need coffee with extra virgin olive oil and syrups? Maybe yes, maybe no,” wrote the magazine’s Michela Becchi. But the chance to promote Italian excellence is a valuable one, she added.

Italy’s olive oil producers’ association, ASSITOL, welcomed “the daring innovation,” saying the line of drinks could “relaunch the image of olive oil, especially among young people.” The association has been promoting adding olive oil to cocktails.

Martina Lunardi, a student of cultural mediation, was sticking to her standard cappuccino on a recent Starbucks visit but said she wasn’t offended by the olive oil combos and might even try one someday.

“Anyway, I know where to get a regular cup of coffee,” Lunardi said.

Schultz came up with the notion of adding olive oil to coffee after visiting an olive oil producer in Sicily and teased the idea as a game-changer in his last earnings call. He

NYC road sign is spelled ‘Jakie’ Robinson

NEW YORK (AP)—New York City’s Department of Transportation swung and missed with a road sign for the Jackie Robinson Parkway that spelled the baseball Hall of Famer’s first name as “Jakie.”

The sign spotted Sunday in Queens featured a picture of Robinson, Major League Baseball’s first African American player in the modern era, over the words “Jakie Robinson Parkway.”

Department of Transportation spokesperson Scott Gas-



A Starbucks sign advertises the company's Oleato coffee in one of their coffee shops in Milan, Italy, Monday, Feb. 27, 2023.

worked with an in-house coffee drink developer to come up with recipes, the international coffee chain said.

Schultz presided over the launch of “Oleato”—meaning “oiled” in Italian—last week on the eve of Milan Fashion Week, with a Lizzo performance for an invitation-only crowd at the company’s Milan Roastery. The beverages will be rolled out in Southern California this spring and in Japan, the Middle East and Britain later this year.

The La Stampa newspaper in Turin taste-tested four of the beverages, giving them marks of 6.5 to 7.5 on a scale of 10. It noted that the only warm beverage on the menu, a version of caffè latte, “has a strong taste that leaves a pleasant taste in the mouth. Grade: 7.”

“The (positive) sensation is that Oleato could be something to drink all year, but most of all that it could be truly tasty in the

tel said the botched sign was replaced Monday.

Robinson broke baseball’s color barrier with the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947. He is celebrated as a civil rights trailblazer and as a superstar athlete who made the All-Star Game six times and batted .313 over his 10-year MLB career.

The road formerly known as the Interboro Parkway was renamed for Robinson in 1997, the 50th anniversary of his groundbreaking rookie season.

summer,” La Stampa said because most are served with ice.

Tourists who throng the Milan Roastery are enticed to give the drinks a try by placards

around the store and a special menu insert advertising the five-drink assortment, which ranges from 5.50 euros to 14 euros (\$5.85 to \$14.85) for a

martini version with vodka.

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Science & Technology

Why TikTok is being banned on gov't phones in US and beyond

By HALELUYA HADERO
ASSOCIATED PRESS

The United States is ratcheting up national security concerns about TikTok, mandating that all federal employees delete the Chinese-owned social media app from government-issued mobile phones. Other Western governments are pursuing similar bans, citing espionage fears.

So how serious is the threat? And should TikTok users who don't work for the government be worried about the app, too?

The answers depend somewhat on whom you ask, and how concerned you are in general about technology companies gathering and sharing personal data.

Here's what to know:

How are the US and other governments blocking TikTok?

The White House said Monday it is giving U.S. federal agencies 30 days to delete TikTok from all government-issued mobile devices.

Congress, the White House, U.S. armed forces and more than half of U.S. states had already banned TikTok amid concerns that its parent company, ByteDance, would give user data—such as browsing history and location—to the Chinese government, or push propaganda and misinformation on its behalf.

The European Union's executive branch has temporarily banned TikTok from em-

ployee phones, and Denmark and Canada have announced efforts to block TikTok on government-issued phones.

China says the bans reveal the United States' insecurities and are an abuse of state power. But they come at a time when Western technology companies, including Airbnb, Yahoo and LinkedIn, have been leaving China or downsizing operations there because of Beijing's strict privacy law that specifies how companies can collect and store data.

What are the concerns about TikTok?

Both the FBI and the Federal Communications Commission have warned that ByteDance could share TikTok user data with China's authoritarian government.

A law China implemented in 2017 requires companies to give the government any personal data relevant to the country's national security. There's no evidence that TikTok has turned over such data, but fears abound due to the vast amount of user data it collects.

Concerns were heightened in December when ByteDance said it fired four employees who accessed data on two journalists from BuzzFeed News and The Financial Times while attempting to track down the source of a leaked report about the company. TikTok spokesperson Brooke Oberwetter said

the breach was an "egregious misuse" of the employees' authority.

There is also concern about TikTok's content and whether it harms teenagers' mental health. Researchers from the nonprofit Center for Countering Digital Hate said in a report released in December that eating disorder content on the platform had amassed 13.2 billion views. Roughly two-thirds of U.S. teens use TikTok, according to the Pew Research Center.

Who has pushed for TikTok restrictions?

In 2020, then-President Donald Trump and his administration sought to force ByteDance to sell off its U.S. assets and ban TikTok from app stores. Courts blocked Trump's efforts, and President Joe Biden rescinded Trump's orders after taking office but ordered an in-depth study of the issue. A planned sale of TikTok's U.S. assets was shelved.

In Congress, concern about the app has been bipartisan. Congress passed the "No TikTok on Government Devices Act" in December as part of a sweeping government funding package. The legislation does allow for TikTok use in certain cases, including for national security, law enforcement and research purposes.

House Republicans are expected to move forward Tuesday with a bill that would give Biden the power to ban TikTok nationwide. The legislation, proposed by Rep. Mike McCaul, looks to circumvent the challenges the administration would face in court if it moved forward with sanctions against the company.

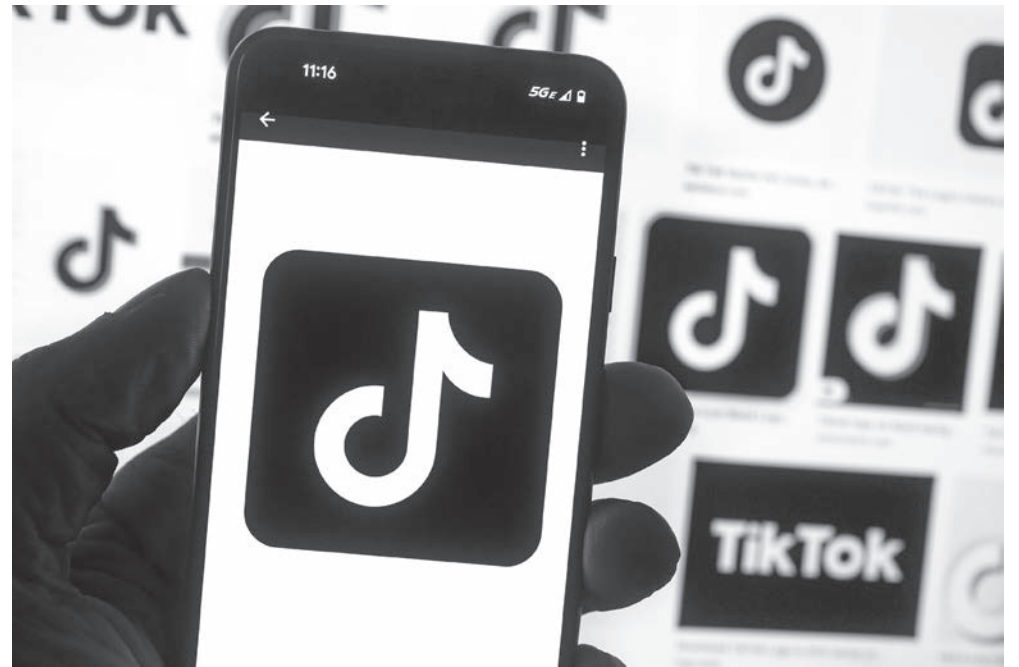
The bill has received pushback from civil liberties organizations. In a letter sent Monday to McCaul and Rep. Gregory Meeks, D-N.Y., ranking member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, the American Civil Liberties Union said a nationwide TikTok ban would be unconstitutional and would "likely result in banning many other businesses and applications as well."

How risky is TikTok?

It depends on who you ask.

U.S. Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco has expressed concerns that the Chinese government could gain access to user data.

"I don't use TikTok, and I



The TikTok logo is seen on a cell phone on Oct. 14, 2022, in Boston.

AP

would not advise anyone to do so," Monaco said earlier this month at the policy institute Chatham House in London.

TikTok said in a blog post in June that it will route all data from U.S. users to servers controlled by Oracle, the Silicon Valley company it chose as its U.S. tech partner in 2020 in an effort to avoid a nationwide ban. But it is storing backups of the data in its own servers in the U.S. and Singapore. The company said it expects to delete U.S. user data from its own servers, but it did not provide a timeline as to when that would occur.

But the amount of information TikTok collects might not be that different from other popular social media sites, experts say.

In an analysis published in 2021, the University of Toronto's nonprofit Citizen Lab said TikTok and Facebook collect similar amounts of user data, including device identifiers that can be used to track a user and other information that can piece together a user's behavior across different platforms. It's valuable information for advertisers.

"If you are not comfortable with that level of data collection and sharing, you should

avoid using the app," the Citizen Lab report said.

What are other experts saying?

While the potential abuse of privacy by the Chinese government is concerning, "it's equally concerning that the US government, and many other governments, already abuse and exploit the data collected by every other U.S.-based tech company with the same data-harvesting business practices," said Evan Greer, director of the nonprofit advocacy group Fight for the Future.

"If policy makers want to protect Americans from surveillance, they should advocate for a basic privacy law that bans all companies from collecting so much sensitive data about us in the first place, rather than engaging in what amounts to xenophobic showboating that does exactly nothing to protect anyone," Greer said.

Others say there is legitimate reason for concern.

People who use TikTok might think they're not doing anything that would be of interest to a foreign government, but that's not always the case, said Anton Dahbura, executive director of the Johns Hop-

kins University Information Security Institute. Important information about the United States is not strictly limited to nuclear power plants or military facilities; it extends to other sectors, such as food processing, the finance industry and universities, Dahbura said.

What does TikTok say?

It's unclear how much the government-wide TikTok ban might impact the company. Oberwetter, the TikTok spokesperson, said it has "no way" of knowing whether its users are government employees.

The company, though, has questioned the bans, saying it has not been given an opportunity to answer questions and that governments were cutting themselves off from a platform beloved by millions.

"These bans are little more than political theater," Oberwetter said.

TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew is set to testify next month before Congress. The House Energy and Commerce Committee will ask about the company's privacy and data-security practices, as well as its relationship with the Chinese government.

Final state emergencies winding down 3 years into pandemic

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP)—California's coronavirus emergency officially ended Tuesday, nearly three years after Gov. Gavin Newsom issued the nation's first statewide stay-at-home order and just days after the state reached the grim milestone of 100,000 deaths related to the virus.

As California's emergency winds down, such declarations continue in just five other states—including Texas and Illinois—signaling an end to the expanded legal powers of governors

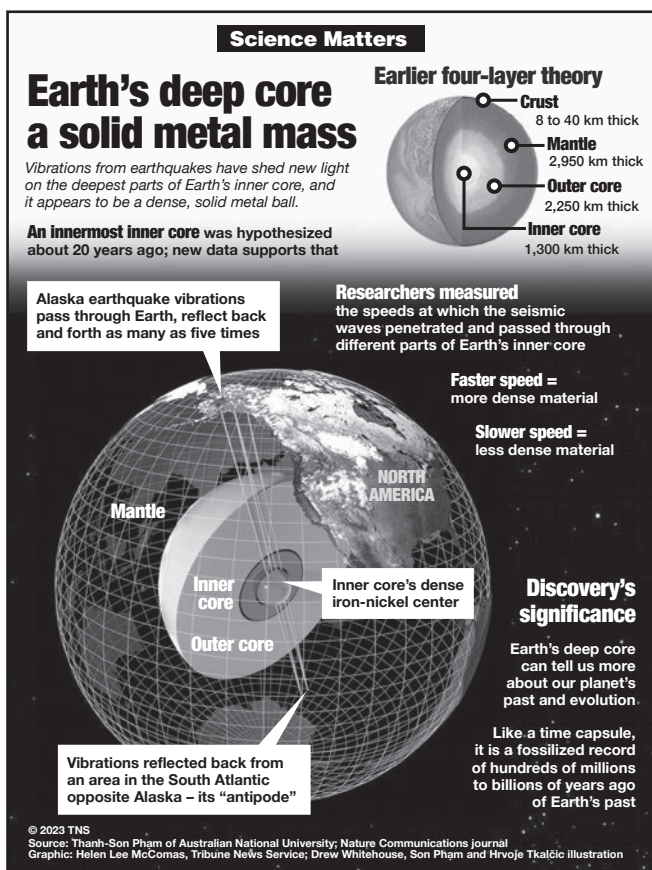
to suspend laws in response to the once mysterious disease. President Joe Biden announced last month the federal government will end its own version May 11.

Newsom on Tuesday signed a proclamation officially ending the state of emergency, declaring "the conditions of extreme peril to the safety of persons and property ... no longer exist."

The end of California's order will have little to no effect on most people as Newsom already lifted most of the state's restrictions, like those that re-

quired masks, closed beaches and forced many businesses to close. It offers a symbolic marker of the end of a period that once drastically altered the lives of the state's nearly 40 million residents.

Illinois' order will end in May alongside the federal order, while the governors of Rhode Island and Delaware recently extended their coronavirus emergency declarations. In New Mexico, public health officials are weighing whether to extend a COVID-19 health emergency beyond its Friday expiration date.



Life & Style

Harry, Meghan asked to leave UK home in further royal rift

LONDON (AP)—Prince Harry and his wife, Meghan, have been asked to vacate their home in Britain, suggesting a further fraying of ties with the royal family amid preparations for the coronation of his father, King Charles III.

Frogmore Cottage, on the grounds of Windsor Castle west of London, had been intended as the couple's main residence before they gave up royal duties and moved to Southern California. The Sun newspaper reported that Charles started the eviction process on Jan. 11, the day after the publication of Harry's

Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, Duke and Duchess of Sussex visit the track and field event at the Invictus Games in The Hague, Netherlands, Sunday, April 17, 2022.



explosive memoir "Spare."

"We can confirm The Duke and Duchess of Sussex have been requested to vacate their residence at Frogmore Cottage," a spokesperson for the couple said in statement.

Disclosures Harry made in "Spare" deepened the rift between him and his family. The book included his account of private conversations with his father, and his brother, Prince William.

After they left Britain,

Harry and Meghan had said Frogmore Cottage would remain their base when they visited the U.K.

In September 2020, a spokesman announced the couple had repaid 2.4 million pounds (\$3.2 million) in British taxpayers' money that was used to renovate the home when they were working members of the royal family.

The money "fully covered" the cost of the renovation, the spokesman said.

Anna Netrebko opera concert canceled by Taiwan orchestra

Taiwan's National Symphony Orchestra canceled a March 5 concert scheduled to feature soprano Anna Netrebko in a decision the orchestra said it made "due to public concerns."

Netrebko had been scheduled to perform with her husband, tenor Yusif Eyvazov, and mezzo-soprano I-Chiao Shih.

The orchestra said in a statement Tuesday that ticket buyers will be offered refunds.

Netrebko, a 51-year-old who was born in Russia and lives in Vienna, was among classical music's top draws until last year, when New York's Metropolitan Opera dropped her after she refused to distance herself from Russian President Vladimir Putin following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

He schedule lists upcoming concerts in Hong Kong on March 9 and 11, and at Tokyo



Netrebko

on March 15. She is scheduled to open the 100th anniversary season of Italy's Arena di Verona on June 16 in the title role of Verdi's "Aida" with Eyvazov, as Radamès.

Miguel Esteban, Netrebko's manager, said she was not commenting on the decision.

"Anna was ready, willing and able to sing to her fans in Taipei," Esteban said in an email to The Associated Press. "Following discussions that began in January 2022, this invitation was formally proposed and accepted in September 2022."

Esteban listed Netrebko's "more than two dozen exceptional performances" since.

"It is unfortunate that someone has allowed the dissonant voices of a minority to deprive a majority from hearing one of the most beautiful operatic voices today," he said. (AP)

Kiss reveal last dates of their farewell tour, ending in NYC

NEW YORK (AP)—Rockers Kiss have announced the final shows of their last tour: The band plans to hang up their platform boots after two back-to-back shows at Madison Square Garden in New York at the end of 2023.

The last leg of the band's 17-date North American tour kicks off in October in Texas and hits California, Washington, Canada, Tennessee, Indiana, Illinois, Maryland and then culminates in their hometown's famous venue on Dec. 1 and Dec. 2.

"Kiss was born in New York



Members of the band Kiss, from left, Tommy Thayer, Paul Stanley, Gene Simmons and Eric Singer attend the premiere of A&E Network's "Biography: KISStory" in New York on June 11, 2021.

City. On 23rd Street. Half a century ago. It will be a privilege and honor to finish touring at Madison Square Garden, 10 blocks and 50 years from where we first started," said the band in a statement.

The band is currently made up of original members Paul Stanley and Gene Simmons as well as Eric Singer and Tommy Thayer. Their best-known songs include "Rock and Roll All Nite," "I Was Made for Lovin' You" and "Detroit Rock City."

Tickets will be available to the public on March 10 at livestation.com.

It added that the book is a "soul-stirring, 100% pure Murakami world."

Staff at the publisher said details about the plot are being withheld because many Murakami fans say they prefer to start reading his books without knowing what they are about.

Murakami's 1st novel in 6 years to hit stores in April

TOKYO (AP)—A new Haruki Murakami novel will be published in April and the publisher is saying little about it except that the Japanese manuscript is around 1,200 pages and the plot involves "a story that had long been sealed."

"The City and Its Uncertain Walls" will be released on April 13 in both print and digital formats, Shinchosha Publishing Co. said in a statement on Wednesday. The availability of an English translation is not yet known.

In a brief promotional and cryptic teaser, the publisher said: "Must go to the city. No matter what happens. A locked up 'story' starts to move quietly as if 'old dreams' are woken up and unraveled in a secluded archive."

Woman's living arrangement leaves her feeling trapped

DEAR ABBY: I live with my longtime boyfriend, "George," and his 88-year-old father, "Frank." Frank is not your average 88-year-old. He does almost everything anyone in their 60s would do. However, he's used to us having dinner for him at the same time every night because he's very regimented about everything.

Frank gets everything taken care of and never has to worry about a thing. He pretty much keeps to himself. We have a coffee machine that's easy to use, but Frank expects to have his coffee at a specific time as well. He refuses to even try to make it himself, which means we can't sleep in even if we want to (we are retired).

I hate that Frank lives with us because it has caused a lot of problems between George and me. I feel trapped. If I have a disagreement with Frank, George takes his father's side, even when he's wrong.

We cannot financially have Frank in his own place, either. I own a third of our house (no mortgage). All three of us depend on our Social Security for household expenses, and Frank pays the insurance on the cars. I just feel that as much as I do for them, I should get some backup. Please let me know your thoughts.

FEELING USED IN FLORIDA

DEAR FEELING USED: If you haven't told George how trapped and unhappy you feel, you should. If you are

the maid, cook and laundress, perhaps it's time he assumed responsibility for his father. Suggest he invest in an automatic coffeemaker that can be set for a specific time the night before Frank's morning coffee is expected. That way you can sleep in if you wish.

From your letter, it's clear to me your problems with the men in your life go beyond coffee duty. If you are truly unhappy with this arrangement (which, predictably, won't last forever), consider consulting an attorney or a financial adviser about how to access the money you have invested in that house so you can live independently.

■■■■

DEAR ABBY: My wife and I had an excellent relationship that involved a lot of partying. After I was injured on the job, I became addicted to painkillers, which resulted in a 20-year battle with addiction. Over the years of trying unsuccessfully to get sober, I asked my wife to slow down her drinking to help me get sober. She refused and, ultimately, our marriage fell apart.

We decided to stay together until our kids were out of school and, wouldn't you know, no sooner did we separate than I was able to get sober. I know it wasn't her fault I was addicted. I think I'm probably better off getting divorced, but I still love her, and I'm curious if you think we should end it or give it another try.

SOBER GUY IN MASSACHUSETTS

DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.



DEAR SOBER GUY: To drink or not to drink is a choice. If your wife was unwilling to sacrifice imbibing in order to help you overcome your addiction, you were right to separate from her. Congratulations on your sobriety. If you wish to maintain it, follow through with that divorce. You have my sympathy. I hope you find someone more supportive in years to come.

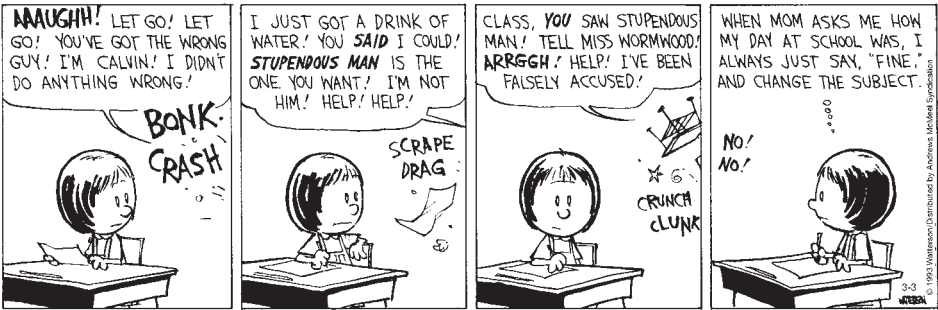
■■■■

Good advice for everyone – teens to seniors – is in "The Anger in All of Us and How to Deal With It." To order, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for \$8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Anger Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

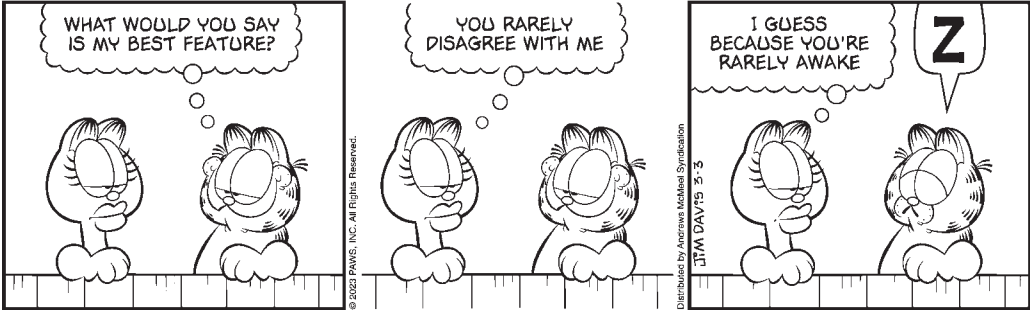
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson



Garfield®

By Jim Davis



Adam@home

By Bryan Basset



The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Tourist's chart

4 NASCAR advertiser

7 "Yippee!"

12 Mineral suffix

13 Mound stat

14 Antlered animal

15 "Kidding!"

16 Assembled

18 French article

19 Suppress, in a way

20 Feudal laborer

22 Damascus is its cap.

23 "The Music Man" setting

27 Cash dispenser

29 Stately dance

31 Shara-pova of tennis

34 Swamp

35 Little angel

37 Tax form ID

38 Pet food brand

DOWN

1 Less

2 Make

3 "Jaws" author

4 Gels

5 Platitude

6 Bash

7 Portent

8 Mortar carrier

9 Ghostly cry

10 Buck-eyes' sch.

11 However

17 Par

21 County

23 Foolish

24 Duo's pronoun

25 Director

26 Sports fig.

28 Sigma's follower

30 Online chats, briefly

31 Roman 1101

32 "Caught ya!"

33 Sleep phenom

36 Poet of yore

37 Justice Alito

40 "Madam Secretary" star

42 Sparkle

43 Xbox enthusiast

44 Mixes up

45 Ancient Brit

46 Diminutive suffix

48 Greyhound vehicle

49 Coffee vessel

50 2016 Olympics city

51 "The Matrix" role

Solution time: 25 mins.

Yesterday's answer 3-3

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Jessica Biel, 41; Julie Bowen, 53; Tone Loc, 57; Jackie Joyner-Kersey, 61.

Happy Birthday: Keep your life simple, your words truthful and your pursuits doable, and you will discover the path to victory. Life is about doing what's right and best for you. Your happiness is attached to your actions and words, not what others do or say. Trust in yourself, your ideals and your dreams. Don't stop until you achieve the happiness you deserve. Your numbers are 6, 13, 24, 29, 36, 38, 44.

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Stop talking and start doing. You'll have to act fast if you want to make up for taking on too much. Preparation will require innovation and originality that match the challenges you encounter. Travel and romance will lead to new beginnings. **

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Don't fall short of your goal because you haven't prepared properly. Look over your options, call in trusted allies and choose to make your home a place everyone feels comfortable sharing and comparing notes. A group effort will pave the way to victory. ****

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Ignore what others are doing, or you will lose sight of what you want to achieve. Helping others is admirable, but before you proceed, ensure your efforts are appreciated and appropriately handled. Someone will disrupt your plans if you are too trusting. ****

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Stop overdoing; incorporate balance into your life. Too much of anything will cost you one

way or another. Think about what you want and act accordingly, and you will reach your goal. Face interference head-on and don't back down. ***

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): You are not alone. Join programs, groups or pursuits with like-minded people, and jump-start something you find fulfilling. Someone you encounter along the way will help you recognize what you have to offer and how to hone your skills. ***

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Choose to make a positive change if you are astute and participate in what's happening around you. Don't let what others do disrupt your plans. Implement what you want to happen and let others fend for themselves. Put your needs first. ***

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Take advantage of whatever comes your way. Be ready to swivel when necessary and change course midstream. Hesitation is the enemy, and trusting your instincts, skills and experience will take you to the winner's circle. Procrastination leads nowhere. ****

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Be a good listener and a resourceful contributor. Taking a unique approach won't please everyone, but if it serves you well, it's the best route. Avoid joint ventures, shared expenses and lofty investments. Choose travel or creative pursuits that promote change. **

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Sit tight and see where the dust settles. A friend or peer will lead you astray if given a chance. Focus on home and family and what you can do to make your life easier. A romantic gesture will encourage a lifestyle change. ***

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Avoid situations that are compromising. Taking on more than you can handle or letting someone take advantage of you will cost you emotionally. Look at your domestic budget and make plans to enact changes that encourage your success and emotional well-being. ***

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Think outside the box, and you'll find a way to outmaneuver someone trying to manipulate you. Don't make a move or change for the wrong reason. Choose your path based on your goal, not someone else's. Don't overspend to make an impression. ***

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Be original in your approach to life, love and happiness. You can reach your goals if you aren't afraid to take the road less traveled. Trust your instincts, change what you don't like and head in a direction that puts a smile on your face. *****

Birthday Baby: You are gifted, trendy and ambitious. You are persuasive and mysterious.

☾: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ☼: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ☼☼: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ☼☼☼: Aim high; start new projects. ☼☼☼☼: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green



Difficulty: ★★★★★

3-3

©2012 Conceptis Puzzles, Dist. by King Features Syndicate, Inc.

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer



Difficulty: ★★

3-2

WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

SKIING IN ASPEN

Solution: 7 letters



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3/3

Aztec, Bear, Beginners, Bellissimo, Bonnie, Boots, Buckhorn, Buttermilk, Coach, Cone, Corkscrew, Dollar, Dump, Enthusiasts, Glades, Goggles, Gretl's, Jackpot, Kristi, Last, Launch, Leaf, Lodge, Midnight, Midway, Nell, Niagara, North, Percy, Poles, Powder, Resort, Rise, Road, Short, Shoulder, Slope, Snow, Spring, Sunscreen, Team, Trail, Turn, Walsh's, Winter

Yesterday's Answer: The Greatest

The NEW Volume 70 can be purchased online at
www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-642-6480.

STUMPED?

For answers to today's crossword, call 1-800-226-5955! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

Kevin Durant makes Suns debut in victory over Hornets



CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP)—Kevin Durant scored 23 points on 10-of-15 shooting in his Suns debut, helping Phoenix snap the Charlotte Hornets' five-game winning streak with a wire-to-wire 105-91 victory Wednesday night.

Devin Booker scored 37 points and Deandre Ayton had 16 points and 16 rebounds in the Suns' seventh victory in 10 games. Chris Paul added 11 assists.

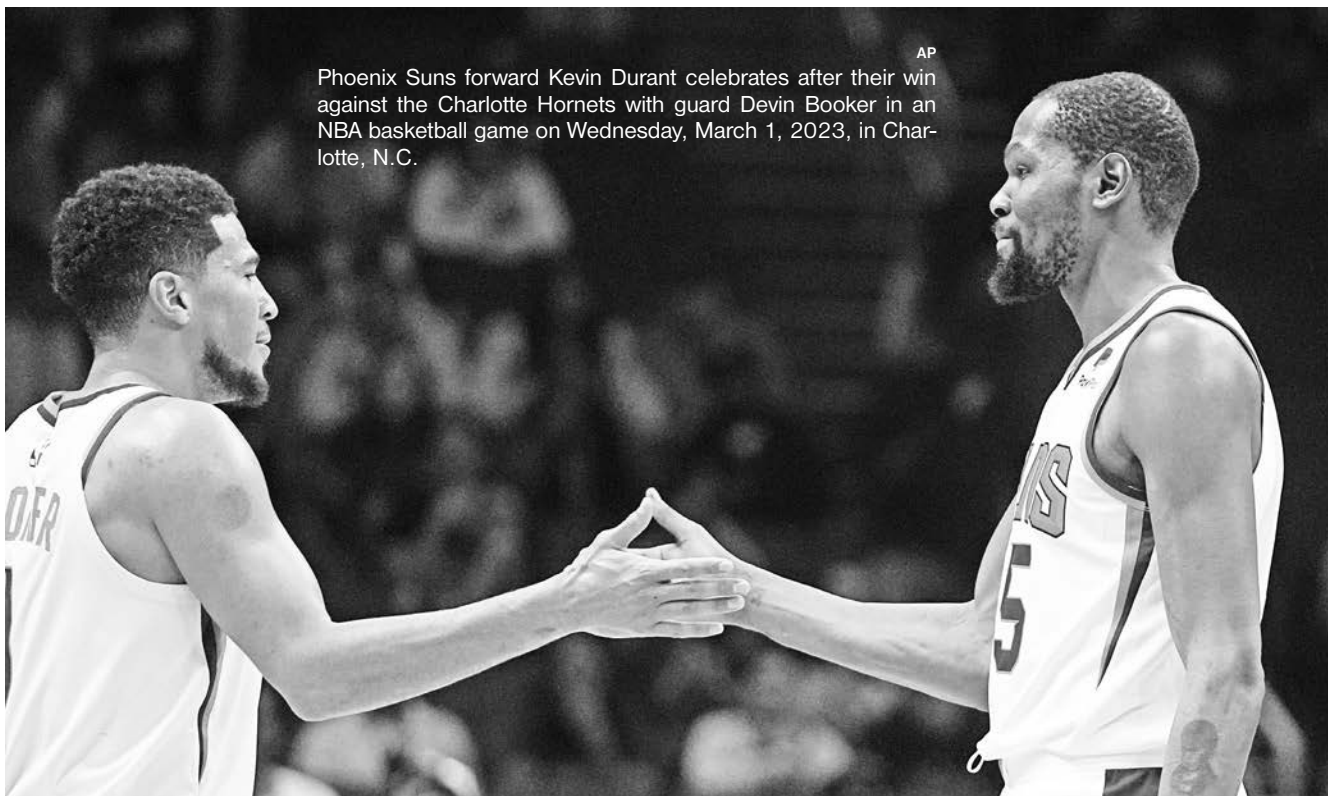
Durant, acquired in blockbuster trade with the Brooklyn Nets on Feb. 9, showed no lingering effects from a sprained right knee that kept him out of action for more than seven weeks.

The 34-year-old star fit in seamlessly with his new club, also grabbing six rebounds and blocking two shots in 27 minutes.

Durant made two 3s, a flurry of mid-range jumpers and showed he still has the burst to get to the hole on a driving left-handed layup for his first basket with the Suns. He also provided a boost on defense, blocking Hornets rookie center Mark Williams twice in the opening five minutes.

The Hornets played without LaMelo Ball, who underwent season-ending surgery Wednesday to repair a fracture in his right ankle. Kelly Oubre Jr. had 26 points, and Terry Rozier added 20.

BUCKS 139, MAGIC 117 MILWAUKEE (AP)—Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 31 points and NBA-leading Milwaukee hit a season-high 26 3-pointers to rout Orlando and extend their winning streak to 16 games.



Phoenix Suns forward Kevin Durant celebrates after their win against the Charlotte Hornets with guard Devin Booker in an NBA basketball game on Wednesday, March 1, 2023, in Charlotte, N.C. AP

The Bucks' franchise record for consecutive wins came in their 1970-71 championship season, when they won 20 straight.

Orlando's Cole Anthony scored a season-high 28 points. Markelle Fultz added 21.

76ERS 119, HEAT 96

MIAMI (AP)—Tyrese Maxey scored 27 points, James Harden added 23 and Philadelphia took control early on the way to a victory over Miami.

Tobias Harris scored 18 points, while Paul Reed had 16 points, 14 rebounds and was plus-26 in 29 minutes for the 76ers, who played without All-Star center Joel Embiid — out with left foot soreness. The 76ers are 9-4 when Embiid doesn't play this season.

Bam Adebayo scored 20 points for the Heat. They beat Philadelphia on the road Monday

but trailed by 25 in the rematch at home.

KNICKS 142, NETS 118

NEW YORK (AP)—Jalen Brunson scored 30 of his 39 points in the first half and New York rolled to its seventh straight victory, routing Brooklyn.

The Knicks made nearly 80% of their shots in a 47-point first quarter and coasted to their second victory over the Nets since their city rivals traded Kevin Durant and Kyrie Irving. Brooklyn had won the previous nine meetings, including the first two this season.

Quentin Grimes scored 22 points and Julius Randle added 21 points, eight rebounds and eight assists as the Knicks opened a two-game lead over the Nets for the No. 5 seed in the Eastern Conference.

Cam Johnson scored a season-high 33 points for the Nets.

They have lost four straight.

CELTICS 117, CAVALIERS 113

BOSTON (AP)—Jayson Tatum scored 18 points in a pivotal third quarter and finished with 41 points as Boston held on to beat Cleveland.

Tatum added 11 rebounds and eight assists in Boston's first victory in three games against Cleveland this season. With his 20th career 40-point game, the 24-year-old Tatum surpassed Giannis Antetokounmpo for seventh place on the NBA's scoring list for players under 25.

Cleveland's Donovan Mitchell scored 44 points and side-stepped an injury following a fall in the third quarter.

LAKERS 123, THUNDER 117

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP)—Dennis Schroder scored 26

points and short-handed Los Angeles beat Oklahoma City.

LeBron James and Anthony Davis both were out with right foot injuries and D'Angelo Russell sat out because of a sprained right ankle.

Troy Brown Jr. scored a season-high 19 points and Austin Reaves added 19 for the Lakers. They have won four of five.

Jalen Williams scored 24 points for the Thunder. Oklahoma City is 0-5 since the All-Star break.

PELICANS 121, TRAIL BLAZERS 110

PORTLAND, ORE. (AP)—Brandon Ingram had a season-high 40 points and New Orleans beat Portland in the first showdown between Damian Lillard and former Trail Blazers teammate CJ McCollum.

McCollum added 24 points to help the Pelicans snap a four-game losing streak. Lillard scored 41 points for the Trail Blazers.

The game marked the first time that Lillard and McCollum played against each other after some nine years together in Portland's backcourt.

McCollum was traded to New Orleans at last season's trade deadline. Lillard was injured at the time and did not play in the two meetings between the two teams after the trade. Lillard was also absent for Portland's visit to New Orleans earlier this season because of injury management.

BULLS 117, PISTONS 115

DETROIT (AP)—Zach LaVine scored 41 points and Detroit called one too many timeouts, helping Chicago hold on for a victory.

The Pistons were trailing by two points with 9.7 seconds left when they called a second straight timeout—one more than they had—to trigger a technical foul that gave LaVine a free throw that he made.

DeMar DeRozan scored 21 points, including two at the line on the extra possession the Pistons gave the Bulls to help seal their 14th straight win in the series.

Bojan Bogdanovic scored 34 for the Pistons. They have dropped six straight games for the third time this season.

GRIZZLIES 113, ROCKETS 99

HOUSTON (AP)—Desmond Bane scored 30 points, Ja Morant added 20 and Memphis sent Houston to its 11th straight loss.

Morant also had seven assists and seven rebounds against the Rockets without playing in the fourth quarter to help the Grizzlies to their third straight victory.

Jalen Green scored 20 points and Kenyon Martin Jr. 19 for Houston.

Analysis: Scoot Henderson says he's ready for NBA draft

By **TIM REYNOLDS**
AP BASKETBALL WRITER

Scoot Henderson is starting to watch the Harry Potter movies. He can easily explain what inertia is. He can't understand why one of his friends always seems to beat him when they go online to play Madden.

In his spare time, he also is getting ready for the NBA draft.

As the playoff push starts in the league, so does the draft push for those who will expect to hear their names called by Commissioner Adam Silver this June. Everybody knows French phenom Victor Wembanyama likely will be picked No. 1. There shouldn't be much mystery about who's going No. 2, either — with Henderson, an explosive point guard who has been drawing comparisons to Russell Westbrook, the consensus choice.

"I'm just ready," Henderson said. "I'm just trying to prepare myself for the next level. I feel right there."

His performance at All-Star weekend probably didn't hurt his stock. Playing with the G League team in the Rising Stars games, Henderson went through All-Star weekend for the second time — an obvious rarity for a player who has yet to appear in the NBA.

"You see the talent," said Oklahoma City's Jalen Williams, who played with Henderson in the Rising Stars event. "There's a reason why he's on draft boards as high as he is."

Henderson has averaged 18.3 points, 6.7 assists and 4.8 rebounds per game for the G League Ignite this season. He flirted with a triple-double on Monday's win over Iowa: 14 points, nine rebounds and

nine assists in just under 29 minutes. He also has averaged about one highlight-reel dunk per game — and at least one question about Wembanyama in interviews since the fall.

There is a mutual respect between the two, who are likely going to be linked for a long time given how the NBA put two exhibitions together between the Ignite and Wembanyama's French team back in October — a prelude with expectations that Wembanyama will be picked No. 1 in the draft and Henderson No. 2.

"I don't listen to critics," Henderson said.

He said in October, and repeated in interviews at All-Star weekend, that there's no rivalry. Henderson isn't motivated by Wembanyama and doesn't view him as an opponent. He's not even that bothered by nobody projecting that he's the

best player in the draft. He just does the work, believing in the end it'll be enough.

"There might be a team that might need a leader, need somebody who can talk, somebody who can communicate on the floor," Henderson said. "I think I can make a big difference."

The Ignite is designed to help players who aren't yet draft eligible but didn't want to follow the one-year-of-college path to get ready for the NBA. Henderson has been with them for two years and has heard plenty of comparisons to top point guards. Derrick Rose's name comes up a lot. So does Westbrook's.

It's high praise for anyone, much less a 19-year-old.

"It's pretty dope to be compared to," Henderson said. "But I think I want to flare off into my own self."

Hornets: LaMelo Ball out for season after ankle surgery

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP)—LaMelo Ball's season is officially over.

The Charlotte Hornets announced that the third-year point guard underwent surgery Wednesday to repair a fracture in his right ankle and will miss the remainder of the season. Ball was injured in Charlotte's victory Monday night over the Detroit Pistons.

The 21-year-old Ball was limited to 36 games this season. He sprained his left ankle three times, costing him 27 games.

He averaged 23.3 points, 6.4 rebounds, 8.4 assists, 1.3 steals and 35.2 minutes.

He was playing particularly well during the Hornets' five-game win streak, making at least five 3-pointers in each of those games while shooting 47.3% (27 of 57) from beyond the arc.

The Hornets said Ball is expected to make a full recovery and that further updates will be provided as appropriate.

The third overall pick in the 2020 NBA draft has appeared in 162 games during his career, averaging 19.4 points, 6.4 rebounds, 7.3 assists, 1.5 steals and 31.8 minutes. He was the NBA's Rookie of the Year in 2021 and an All-Star in 2022.

2023 Budweiser BASA league start this Sunday



LEIGH GASES

Queens of Diamond won the 2022 Budweiser Belau Amateur Softball Association Women's League last December at the DanDan Softball Field.

By LEIGH GASES

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REPORTER

Softball fever is back just in time for Spring as the Budweiser Belau Amateur Softball Association Annual Master's and Women's Softball League makes its comeback for the 2023 season this Sunday, March 5.

The games will be held every Sunday at the DanDan Softball Field.

Games are from 9am to 3pm and will have a total

of 11 men's teams and five women's teams vying for softball glory.

The five women's teams vying for the championship are the Lady Blue Jays, Hotshots, Lady Legals, Lady Sufa, and BDE.

In the men's master's league, the teams are Tokahao, Hagu Lamun, Asahi, Peleliu, Ngaraard Red Men, Aimeliik 1 Time, Man Amigos, Momma Charo, Sufa,

and Wazzup.

Last season, a total of 16 teams consisting of six women's and 10 men's master's teams joined the 2022 Budweiser BASA league. The Queens of Diamonds won the women's division championship, while Tokahao won the men's division title.

Budweiser BASA vice president McQueen Masaharu would like to thank all teams participating in this



WOMEN

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but challenging competition as I was trying to push myself but always kept reminding myself to have fun. It was also nice to have a big presence of CNMI weightlifting there. Last year it was only me and Joey Tudela who ended up competing in March."

She said that going up against Ichiuo was fun and that it's awesome to see her improvements since the NMPMG. "She won a well deserved silver and I am happy for her. She's catching up to me," said Labausa.

As for her own performance, Labausa said that she felt good with her snatch lifts. "I have been dealing with right knee pain for a while but I was glad it held up to attempt competition PRs again. I broke my competition snatch record by 1kg and I tried to do 100kg for my clean & jerk but I ended up missing the jerk. I was disappointed as it seems to always be so elusive for me but I am happy to hit my consistent 173kg [total weight] in the 81kg class on a day where I didn't feel the greatest physically."

After the competition, she said that she felt happy about

her first-place win. She will take a 10-day active rest time to give her knee a rest then continue her training for the Micro/Pacific Games. She said is ready to do her best at both games and that she will really have to work on her weaknesses in the clean & jerk when she gets back to training.

Labausa will not compete in the last qualifier this month but will be coaching the newer athletes who want to compete.

Coach to Rasa and Pua, she said "I'm proud of Kaya and Devine for doing their second competition, they both broke their previous personal competition snatch, clean & jerk, and total. I'm excited to see how they progress with more training time. They just started in August 2022."

Labausa then thanked the CNMI Weightlifting Federation, Northern Marianas Sports Association, and Guam Weightlifting for putting on a great meet. She then said "great job to my teammates this past weekend."

Rasa claimed third in the youth division after she lifted a total weight of 102kg, with a best snatch lift of 43kg and a best clean & jerk lift of 59kg. In the junior category, she finished fourth and replicated her lift numbers in the youth division.

In the women's open division, she also had the same numbers in her lifts and claimed fifth place.

For the 17-year-old lifter of just six months, Rasa said she was nervous in her first international competition. "It felt like a new atmosphere. I observed a lot of competitors and learned a lot. I can't wait for more international competitions."

Going up against Guam and Palau lifters for the first time, she felt intimidated because of how experienced everyone was. "I was the second one to go up on stage however I was also the first to fail my second snatch out of all the competitors. However, I wasn't the only one throughout the competition and it taught me that anything can happen. You can fail or succeed—it all depends on if you want to keep going and that's what myself and everyone else did. Overall, everyone was having a great time," said Rasa.

As her second competition overall, she said she wasn't as nervous as her first competition last January, but that she definitely felt tense. Even with that, Rasa broke two competition personal bests for the snatch and clean & jerk.

Rasa said that even if she doesn't make the cut for the national team, she said that it

year's league.

Wahoo in the Marianas reset to March 11

By MARK RABAGO

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ASSOCIATE EDITOR



Tasi To Table has postponed the 4th Annual Wahoo in the Marianas Fishing Tournament originally set tomorrow, March 4, to next Saturday, March 11.

"Due to the inclement weather forecasted for this coming Saturday and for the safety of our participants Tasi To Table has postponed the 4th Annual Wahoo in the Marianas. The new date is March 11, 2023 same place and time," said Tasi To Table president Gene Weaver.

With the postponement, the pre-registration will now be held on March 10, 4pm-6pm at the Smiling Cove Marina.

There, officials from Tasi To Table and PSS Youth Fishing

For more information about the 2022 Budweiser BASA Annual Master's and Women's

League, contact Masaharu at (670) 286-6225 or Leo Bobai at (670) 285-3426.

Clubs will go over the rules and regulations of the one-day tournament.

The next day on March 11, the 4th Annual Wahoo in the Marianas Fishing Tournament will proceed.

All boats must check out at Smiling Cove Marina on March 11, 2023. The Wahoo in the Marianas Fishing Tournament officially begins at 6am and continues throughout the day until 5pm.

The trolling competition will award fishermen who catch the heaviest wahoo \$2,000, while the second and third heaviest will go home with \$1,500 and \$1,000, respectively. Total weight, which make up the three heaviest non-placing wahoo, will receive \$500.

The official weigh station is at Smiling Cove Marina. In order for the catch to qualify, the

tip of your boat must pass the Smiling Cove Marina's navigational light before 5pm.

As a reminder, organizers said all boats must check in at Smiling Cove Marina regardless of any catch (personally or by contacting tournament officials).

Entrance fee is \$200 per boat for one captain and two anglers. Each additional angler will cost \$30.

Presentation of awards will take place immediately after official results are received from the weighmaster.

Last year, *Salty Bandits* reeled in a 48.2-lb wahoo to top the 3rd Annual Wahoo in the Marianas. For their efforts, captain Masaki Kitami and crew hand Austin Benavente pocketed the \$2,000 top prize and bragging rights for a whole year.

We had eight lifters (including three youth and one junior lifters) who had never before competed in an international format. They all did very well, each of them winning gold in the respective age divisions. Our veteran lifters continue to improve. The senior lifters will continue to train for the Micronesian

Games and Pacific Games."

As for what's next, he said "We will start some fundraisers and other activities in hopes of raising funds to send our youth and junior athletes to compete in the Oceania Junior/Youth/U23 Championships in Rarotonga, Cook Islands in August 2023."

TAN

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He said that the sponsorship will cover utility costs, field and maintenance costs, and game officials. "This sponsorship is certainly going to go a long way in determining the success of our season," said Santos.

As for the 11 teams consisting of the Cardinals, Braves, Falcons, CK Bears, Brewers, Bandits, Blue Jays, Jr. Nationals, Comets, Natives, and D'9ers, Santos said that "I'm excited that there's 11 teams. It just tells me that people want baseball back and I'm hopeful that it'll be a very competitive season."

Santos added that Tan will throw out the ceremonial

first pitch.

In Tan's remarks, he said "you cannot talk about sports in the CNMI without talking about baseball. It's America's pastime." He recalled how sad it was after the past typhoons damage on the fields, but that even without it, the CNMI still took home gold in baseball during the Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022.

For the opening ceremony this month, Tan said that "it will be a very happy day for the community—not just for the players and coaches, but the entire community." He thanked SBL for agreeing to take on the sponsorship. "We're thankful to Jay and the rest of the board for the opportunity. We're very excited to see 11 teams play—the biggest amount so far and it will grow from there."

Tolentino, for her part, said that "we are happy to be part of baseball. [Tan Holdings] celebrated its 50th anniversary last year but wanted baseball to be a part of it so we extended it... I hope that this partnership is not only for this season. Tan Holdings wants to continue its partnership with SBL in the future."

Fans will also be shaded and dry under the bleachers that now have covers over it. The season will last until June and will be played at night. There is no set schedule yet besides the opening day which will have two games.

Santos said that with the end of the season in June, hopefully the timing is right to send a CNMI team to play in Palau for the Micronesian Baseball Classic also set in June.

TWO

From Page 24

the island.

"We battled all race long. He just shadowed from start to finish and I just managed to fend him off with the right moves and riding technique at the end," he added.

Celis said if not for Alvarez taking him under his wing, he wouldn't be half the motocross rider he is today.

"I owe a lot of my success in the sport of motocross to him because we train together and belong to the same racing team—Trench Tech Racing."

Celis also thanked all the motocross riders who continue to pursue the hobby despite the tough economic times.

"It's really hard to continue to do motocross because of the rise in gas prices and other commodities," he said, adding that it's more difficult for families like theirs who have not one but several riders in the family.

He dedicated his February win in the Veterans Class to his family, especially his wife, Shoko; his Trench Tech Racing family; and Joeten Motors Co./Yamaha.

"My wife has always been

super supportive of me and our two daughters who also ride. I also want to thank Boss Alvarez (Joeten Motors Sales manager) for giving me a great deal on my new 2022 Yamaha YZ250F. I also want to thank Pacific Trading Co. and Charles Cepeda (MRA president and PTC general manager) for all their help in making the points series possible," he said.

Celis, who is a board member of MRA, also thanked the Saipan Mayor's Office and the Department of Public Works for always helping them make the course ready for their monthly races.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

CNMI weightlifters pose for a photo with Guam and Palau weightlifters after the Guam Open National Championships 2023 last Saturday in Barrigada, Guam.

Tottos on a winning streak in MS boys v-ball

By LEIGH GASES

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REPORTER

The DanDan Middle School Tottots boys varsity volleyball team is on a four-game winning streak in the NMIVA-PSS Interscholastic Middle School Volleyball League 2022-2023.

Their latest conquest came against Saipan Community School on Tuesday at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

The Tottots' rotation of Jordan Agulto, Rodel Apostol, Christopher and Tyler Cruz, Arvin Hornejas, Shayne Ngir-cheungel, Matthew Peters, Kallan Seidler, Dane Tibayan, Bernard Villagomez, Andrei Viola, Endree Yangilmau, and Joshua Yorormad, trampled through the Guardians in two swift sets, 21-14, 21-10.

The Guardians tried to stave off the Tottots in the last set to try and force a third tie-breaking set, but the Tottots had the



A Tanapag Middle School varsity volleyball player in black attempts to defend the net against a Hopwood Middle School player in this file photo of the NMIVA-PSS Interscholastic Middle School Boys Volleyball League 2022-2023 at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

LEIGH GASES

upper hand and finished the game to save and add their fourth win in their streak.

The Tottots' faced off with the Tanapag Middle School Tatagas last Feb. 23 and won in two sets, 21-16; last Feb.

21, the Tottots won against Mount Carmel School, 21-18, 21-8; and last Feb. 16, the Guardians fell to the Tottots

for the first time in three sets, 21-16, 15-21, 15-3.

Save for its loss against the Tanapag Middle School Tata-

gas last Feb. 7, the Tottots are now on top of the Pool A varsity standings with 6 wins.

In other results on Tuesday, the Tatagas survived against Hopwood Middle School in three exciting sets, 21-18, 22-21, 15-10; Grace Christian Academy outlasted Francisco M. Sablan Middle School, 21-19, 21-16; Saipan International School defeated Agape Christian School, 21-7, 21-18; HMS JV beat ChaCha Ocean View Middle School, 14-21, 23-21, 15-8; and DMS JV won against SIS JV, 21-6, 21-7.

In Pool A standings behind DMS is TMS with 6 wins and 2 loss; SCS is at an even 3-3; HMS is 2-4; and Mount Carmel School has yet to win with 6 losses.

In Pool B standings, SIS leads with 6 wins; Agape Christian School is at 5-3; GCA is 4-2; FMS is still 1-5; and COVMS has yet to win with 6 losses.

In the junior varsity standings, HMS is undefeated with 3 wins; DMS has a 3-1 card; SCS is 1-1; COVMS has 2 losses; and SIS has 3 losses.

Grappling takes off in MHS Olympics



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Grappling was one of the featured sports in last Monday's MHS Dolphins Olympic sport.

In an effort to expand athletic opportunities for students, the administration of the Marianas High School has announced the addition of grappling as an MHS Dolphins Olympic sport. Grappling, which involves various forms of wrestling and submission techniques, will provide a new outlet for students to showcase their physical prowess and competitive spirit.

The decision to introduce grappling was made after careful consideration by school officials, who recognized the growing popularity of the sport both locally and nationally. MHS hopes that by offering grappling, it will attract a wider range of students who may not have been interested in more traditional sports like football or basketball.

To ensure that the sport is conducted safely and with proper technique, the school has invested into procur-

ing experienced referees and trainers from local mixed martial arts and Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu academy Trench Tech Purebred Saipan.

Students have also received briefings on the general rules of the sport to ensure safety as well as training in the school-based MMA club.

The sophomore team, led by Lincoln Manibusan, emerged as the ultimate champions in the 16-team bracket, with Manibusan going undefeated throughout the competition. It's worth noting that seniors Uriel Woodruff and Miles Borja took second and third place, respectively, while freshman Devon Reyes and junior Jhos Lunzaga claimed fourth and fifth place.

With the introduction of grappling, MHS continues to demonstrate its commitment to providing diverse and inclusive athletic opportunities for all students. (PR)

Atkins Kroll Saipan offers Toyota 4Runner



Atkins Kroll Saipan recently announced

that it will be offering a brand new 2023 Toyota 4Runner SR5 as a hole-in-one prize for Northern Marianas College Foundation's upcoming Golf Open in March.

"At Atkins Kroll Saipan, we are always looking for ways to give back to our community and support amazing causes," Atkins Kroll Saipan general manager Joel Lesh said. "That's why we are thrilled to offer a brand new Toyota 4Runner as the hole-in-one prize for the upcoming golf tournament. We believe this prize will add even more excitement to the event and help raise awareness and funds for the important work being done by the NMC Foundation. We can't wait to see who will be the lucky winner of the 4Runner, and we are proud to be part of such a meaningful event."

For the first time, NMC's tournament will be a two-day event and will be held on March 18 and 19, 2023, on the east and west courses of the Laolao Bay Golf & Resort. The tournament fee for the 2023 golf open is \$250. First place winners in the Men's Championship, A, B, C, Senior, and Ladies flights will each receive \$500. Second place finishers will receive \$300 and third place finishers will receive \$200.

"The Foundation is thrilled to partner with Atkins Kroll Saipan for the upcoming golf



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Atkins Kroll Saipan will be offering a brand new 2023 Toyota 4Runner SR5 as a hole-in-one prize for NMC's upcoming Golf Open on March 18 and 19, 2023.

tournament,"

NMC Foundation chair Ben Babauta said. "This generous offer from Atkins Kroll Saipan will add even more excitement to the event, and we are grateful for their continued support of our mission to provide students with access to high-quality education."

This year's tournament will feature thousands of dollars in amazing hole-in-one prizes, such as a \$10,000 shopping spree at Top Shelf Wine and Spirits, \$10,000 from Ambyth Shipping and Seafix Inc., \$5,000 from Pacifica Insurance, \$3,000 from McDonald's of Saipan, a YETI cooler from Boarderline, a brand new 2023 Hyundai IONIQ 5 SEL

with Navigation and AWD, a brand new 2023 Mitsubishi Outlander from Triple J Motors, and a brand new 2023 Nissan Rogue from Joeten Motors.

The tournament, which is the signature event of the NMC Foundation, aims to raise funds for the college for its rebuilding and reconstruction efforts. Despite the devastation and destruction of Super typhoons Soudelor and Yutu, the college has been aggressively seeking funds from all available sources to rebuild classrooms, offices, labs, and workforce spaces for the CNMI community. The foundation is seeking the CNMI private sector's support through fundraising events

like the golf tournament.

Interested companies and individuals who would like to help the College with its rebuilding efforts can donate educational tax credit, cash, or in-kind contributions by visiting www.marianas.edu/golf or by contacting NMC Foundation coordinator Carla Sablan at carla.sablan@marianas.edu or (670) 237-6780.

Golfers who would like to register for the upcoming tournament can also visit www.marianas.edu/golf. Only online payments are accepted for this upcoming golf open.

For more updates, follow Northern Marianas College on Facebook and Instagram ([nmc.proa](https://www.facebook.com/nmc.proa)) or visit www.marianas.edu. (PR)



Kevin Durant
makes Suns debut
in victory over
Hornets
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Saipan Tribune Sports

Tottos on a
winning streak in
MS boys v-ball

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24 FRIDAY, MARCH 3, 2023

SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Women lifters excel in Guam tourney

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

And she lifted happily ever after. That's what CNMI's women lifters did after they topped their respective divisions in the Guam Open National Championships 2023 held last Saturday at the Guam National Guard Center in Barrigada, Guam.

However, the job of being a strong woman doesn't stop there as they set their sights for more international competitions on the horizon—the 2023 Micronesian Games and the 2023 Pacific Games.

Antonette Labausa topped the open 81-kg division; Rihella Ichio placed second in the 81-kg division; Kaya Rasa placed third in the youth 59-kg weight class, fourth in the junior 59kg, and fifth in the 59-kg open division; Pipit Ball placed third in the 59-kg open weight class; and Devine Pua snagged sixth place in the 59-

kg division.

Ball improved her total weight lifted from the 2022 Northern Marianas Pacific Games from 107kg to 118kg and Ichio went from 131kg to 150kg.

Labausa went up against Ichio and Palau's Claire Kintoki and had an overall weight lifted of 173kg. Her best snatch was 77kg and her best clean & jerk was 96kg.

The 28-year-old last competed in Guam in March 2022 and said that "this past weekend's competition was a good

See WOMEN on Page 22



The CNMI's Antonette Labausa successfully lifts a personal best of 77kg in the snatch portion of the Guam Open National Championships 2023 last Saturday in Barrigada, Guam. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Tan Holdings sponsors 2023 season of SBL



From left, Northern Marianas Sports Association general secretary Valerie Hofschneider, NMSA board member Nick Gross, Saipan Baseball League board member Herman Kintol, Tan Holdings Corp. vice president for Business Development and NMSA board member Alex Sablan, Tan Siu Lin Foundation executive director Merlie Tolentino, SBL president Jay Santos, Tan Holdings Corp. president and CEO Jerry Tan, SBL board member Shine Tenorio, SBL vice president George Camacho, and SBL board member Kyle Hocog pose for a photo after the formalization of Tan Holdings as a \$10,000 sponsor of the 2023 SBL season last Wednesday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium conference room.

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

America's pastime is back in the CNMI after a four-year hiatus and Tan Holdings Corp. is bankrolling the Saipan Baseball League's 2023 season to the tune of \$10,000, with the opening game scheduled this Saturday, March 25, at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Baseball Field in Susupe.

The SBL board, including president Jay Santos, vice president George Camacho, board members Herman Kintol, Mark Flores, Shine Tenorio, and Kyle Hocog, were joined by Tan Holdings president and CEO Jerry Tan, Tan Siu Lin Foundation executive director Merlie Tolentino, and Tan Holdings vice president for Business



Development and Northern Marianas Sports Association member Alex Sablan, along with NMSA member Nick Gross and NMSA general secretary Valerie Hofschneider, and SBL coaches and managers in the formalization of its sponsorship last Wednesday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium conference room.

Santos was emotional as he looked around the room full of people who had a role in the resumption of baseball in the CNMI. He was speechless when he had the floor and finally thanked Tan and the entire Tan Holdings for agreeing to sponsor the season. "The sponsorship will go a long way to getting baseball back on track," said Santos.

See TAN on Page 22

Two in a row for Celis in Veterans Class

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Dave Celis again took the checkered flag in the Veteran Class of the 2023 Monster Energy Point Series Race last Sunday at the Cowtown Race Track.

The 45-year-old edged Expert Class winner Justis "Cuki" Alvarez in the Marianas Racing Association February race with a perfect score of 50 points to follow up his victory in the January edition of the competition.

Alvarez finished second in the six-lap race with 44 points, followed by Melvin Cepeda's 40 points. Charles Cepeda (36 points), Bob Ferrer (31 points), and Ray Yumul (31 points) complete the lineup for the Veterans Class in the February race.

"I rode it smart and safe again. It's dry and hot [on the track], but it's all part of motocross so no excuses," said Celis, who did acknowledge that Alvarez is the true GOAT of motocross on

See TWO on Page 22



LAO ZHANG
Dave Celis leads the Veteran Class of the 2023 Monster Energy Point Series Race last Sunday at the Cowtown Race Track.